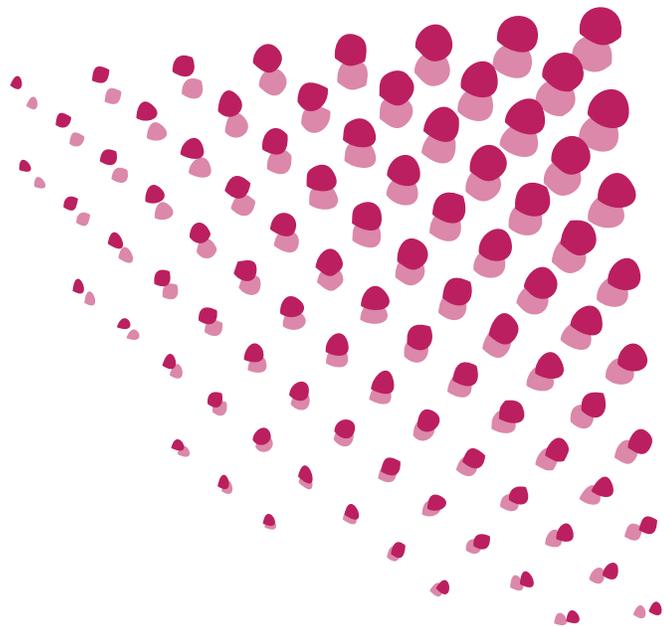
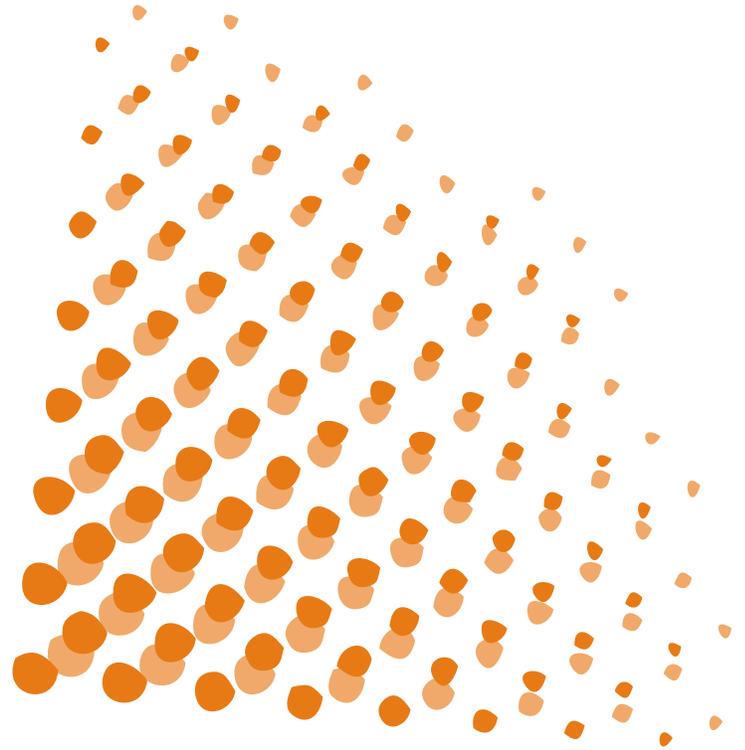


Opportunity Chicago: 2006-2010



Improving Access to Employment for
Public Housing Residents in Chicago

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July 2012

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Prepared for

The Partnership for New Communities

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July 2012



OPPORTUNITY
CHICAGO

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Executive Summary



Introduction

Opportunity Chicago (the Initiative) was a pioneering attempt to help 5,000 public housing residents prepare for and find employment over five years, improving the workforce development system along the way to create a smoother path for other low-skilled, low-income jobseekers to come. Founded in 2006 through the collaborative efforts of The Partnership for New Communities (PNC), the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), and the Department of Family and Support Services (formerly Mayor's Office of Workforce Development), the Initiative was launched in response to the Plan for Transformation (the Plan). Adopted by CHA in 2000, the Plan was a nationally unprecedented overhaul of Chicago's public housing. A cornerstone of the Plan was the demolition of thousands of distressed public housing units and the construction of new mixed-income developments in their place.

The Initiative was designed as a cross-sector collaboration that strategically convened and leveraged resources. The process and structure that was developed marshaled the collective capacity of the City's workforce development system and public housing resources. The Chicago Jobs Council (CJC), appointed to facilitate and manage the Initiative, and a Strategic Advisers Group (SAG), consisting of a range of stakeholders, collaborated to guide implementation of the Initiative's strategic priorities.

In order to reach the goal of placing 5,000 public housing residents into employment, the Initiative established the following strategic priorities:

- 1 Promote the development and expansion of employment skills and training programs (including Bridge programs and transitional employment);
- 2 Support the continued development of employment opportunities by engaging employers in the design and implementation of sector or industry-based partnerships;
- 3 Advocate for public policy changes to improve the workforce development system's capacity to help low-skilled, low-income individuals earn family-supporting incomes;
- 4 Expand and/or enhance the existing service delivery system to maximize employment opportunities; and
- 5 Evaluate and document the Initiative's effectiveness and its replicable lessons.

Key Strategies and Interventions

The Initiative invested in and implemented a range of program offerings and strategies to foster longer-term labor market success of jobseekers residing in public housing in Chicago. There are important differences across program types; program length, entry requirements and availability varied as programs were launched (and sometimes terminated) at different times. Residents primarily accessed Opportunity Chicago in the following ways:

FamilyWorks (and Service Connector before that) is a voluntary comprehensive case management program independent of Opportunity Chicago and available to CHA's resident population. In addition to case management services, FamilyWorks offers job readiness training, job placement and retention services.

Transitional Jobs combined skill development, supportive services, and temporary, subsidized employment placements to help residents with little or no work history transition into the labor market.

City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) Bridge Programs and Technical Skills Training programs included a variety of career programs with technical-occupational skills training (certificates and advanced certificates)

in addition to more traditional Associate Degree programs. CCC also offered GED, ESL and Career Bridge Programs for those who needed to improve their reading and math skills while preparing to enter the workforce.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs: Services of varying intensity were provided through a system of partners and included job search, planning, and preparation services; skills assessments, case management, career development, and job retention/advancement assistance; and technical training through the City Colleges of Chicago and other WIA-certified training providers.

Industry Skills Training targeted specific high-demand industries and sectors, which initially included: transportation/warehousing/logistics (TWL), healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, and retail and hospitality.

Contextualized Literacy Programs targeted CHA's working-age residents with reading levels between the 4th and 9th grades, offering literacy services contextualized to targeted sectors and occupations, with supportive services and established linkages to employers resulting in direct employment placements.

Major Observations and Findings

- » 6,743 public housing residents participated in a range of Opportunity Chicago programs.
- » 5,185 residents worked after exit, surpassing the Initiative goal of placing 5,000 residents into employment in 5 years.
- » 77 percent of program participants gained employment.
- » The number of participants who worked increased in every year of the program despite the economic downturn.
- » 23 percent of those who worked after exit had not worked in the two years prior to engagement in the Initiative.
- » 54 percent of residents retained employment for two or more years.
- » Systems changes are still in progress, but early indications point toward:
 - Greater local collaboration among workforce systems actors;
 - Better integration and 'mainstreaming' of public housing residents into existing citywide efforts; and
 - An opportunity to influence important systems reorganization currently under way, including the reconfiguration of three workforce boards into a single entity, the recalibration of the Plan for Transformation and the reinvention of City Colleges.

Initiative Structure

Opportunity Chicago was collaborative by design, with PNC, CHA and CJC at the coordinating center. Staffing of the Initiative was lean; neither PNC nor CJC had more than two individuals assigned to the Initiative at any one time. Housed at The Partnership for New Communities and facilitated by the Chicago Jobs Council, the Initiative's partners convened a Strategic Advisers Group (SAG) to develop comprehensive, career-focused workforce development strategies for CHA residents. The SAG's role was advisory – to provide expertise and knowledge of best practices, to review Initiative plans and activities, to provide other resources as appropriate, and to advocate for public policy and systems change.

Target Population and Participant Profile

The Initiative exclusively focused on residents living in CHA developments as of October 1999, when the Plan for Transformation began. Residents' participation in Opportunity Chicago programs, including those directly funded by CHA, was voluntary, and residents primarily accessed services through a case manager affiliated with one of the teams of FamilyWorks (initially Service Connector) contractors located throughout the city.

Financing

The Initiative's goal was to secure sufficient funding to start the Initiative, with an explicit understanding that Opportunity Chicago would be time limited and terminate after a set period of time (originally three years, then extended to five). The original plan was to identify and/or raise \$23 million. These funds would be pooled and aligned with public and more restrictive funds. Opportunity Chicago ultimately raised and expended more than \$27 million from a combination of public and private sources, the majority of which was spent on program costs.

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Systems Integration and Change

Opportunity Chicago's goal was to identify employment barriers within the system and to reduce those barriers by creating processes that would result in a smoother and more streamlined path to employment for CHA residents. The Initiative identified the following systems issues: 1) inadequate systems for communicating information about service and employment opportunities, 2) organizational silos, 3) service fragmentation and duplication, 4) job placement services not well tailored to the needs of public housing residents, 5) difficulty accessing services, and 6) systems policies that result in disincentives for residents to seek and maintain employment.

Management Information System

CHA invested considerable resources in the development and maintenance of a database for use by all CHA contractors, including those involved in Opportunity Chicago. The database was a basic case management referral system not originally designed for workforce development purposes. Over time, CHA significantly revamped the system to 1) integrate a consistent assessment tool, 2) define indicators that would be used consistently across all providers, 3) integrate PNC-funded projects, and 4) track workforce outcomes. By the end of the Initiative, the system was greatly improved and CHA had implemented a performance-based contract system that required vendors to report outcomes into the new system. CHA also invested in dedicated data staff to review and mine the data on a regular basis.

Resident-Level Outcomes

Opportunity Chicago was launched at an inauspicious time amidst economic uncertainty and employment instability, followed by a recession that pummeled economic activity and employment. As the ranks of unemployed Chicagoans increased over the life of the Initiative, CHA residents were forced to compete with larger numbers of jobseekers, who often had better qualifications, more consistent work records, and fewer barriers to employment. As a result, Opportunity Chicago's challenge was to increase programmatic capacity in order to, first, reach participation goals, and second, to develop programs that would assist CHA residents entering an increasingly competitive job market. In response to those challenges, Opportunity Chicago developed a range of program offerings to meet the diverse needs of the target population. Between 2006 and 2010, the Initiative, combined with CHA direct funding, awarded grants to a variety of providers to educate, train and place CHA residents into employment. Outcomes for residents include the following:

1. Across the six Initiative-funded program types, 6,743 CHA residents participated in at least one program. Seventy-seven (77) percent of participants worked after leaving a program, though the employment rate among participants varied by program type. Those who received assistance finding a job through case management had the highest employment rate, and contextualized literacy participants – the smallest and newest of the program types – had the lowest placement rate. Note that each program served a different target population and had a different design, which makes it difficult to compare placement rates between programs.



2. The number of program participants who worked increased in every year. This is especially notable since it is likely that better prepared jobseekers secured employment earlier in the program period, while jobseekers with more barriers to employment were being placed in jobs toward the end of the Initiative at the peak of the economic downturn.
3. A majority of the participants who were served by the Initiative (68 percent) were either consistently unemployed or sporadically employed at program entry (meaning they had worked none or less than half of possible quarters in the two years before program entry). Of those who were consistently unemployed, nearly 50 percent saw improvement in their employment status after exiting an Initiative-funded program, an impressive achievement given the economic downturn.
4. Overall, 49 percent of participants who were placed in employment saw an increase in the percentage of quarters they worked, and 23 percent saw a decrease in the percentage of quarters worked. The average number of days retained among all placements was 232 days, or about 7.5 months. More than half of placements (54 percent) were retained for two or more years as of the end of the Initiative; some placements may still be ongoing.
5. While 59 percent of participants saw an increase in quarterly earnings between entry into and exit from a program, overall individual earnings remain low at about \$10,752 annually.
6. Employment was largely concentrated in three industry sectors targeted by the Initiative at the outset: Health Care and Social Assistance (31 percent), Retail Trade (13 percent), and Accommodation and Food Services (10 percent). These three sectors combined account for more than 50 percent of all placements. They tend to have low entry barriers, but also tend to pay low wages.

Opportunity Chicago was launched at an inauspicious time amidst economic uncertainty and employment instability, followed by a recession that pummeled economic activity and employment.



Findings and Lessons Learned

Opportunity Chicago brought together key workforce leaders to tackle the problem of limited or spotty workforce attachment by public housing residents. The Initiative contended with a difficult local economy that magnified the challenges of working with a population characterized by high numbers of chronically unemployed residents and residents with challenges such as low literacy skills. In spite of these challenges, the Initiative demonstrated success on a number of employment outcomes, and it provides important lessons regarding Initiative management, workforce partnerships, employer engagement, and workforce systems alignment and change.

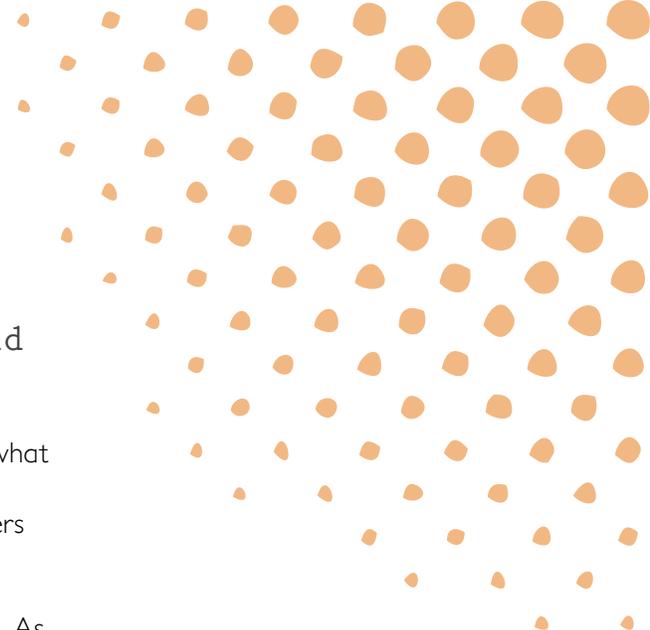
Lessons about Managing Partnerships

- » **Abandon individual silos and agendas and work together on a single goal and collective approach.** The Plan for Transformation was a visible and clear rallying point to organize partners and stakeholders, and the absence of a workforce strategy provided the agenda to develop a collective approach and concrete objective (to place 5,000 public housing residents into jobs in five years).

Opportunity Chicago brought together key workforce leaders to tackle the problem of limited or spotty workforce attachment by public housing residents.

“Decentralized leadership” was integral to Opportunity Chicago’s basic operating and management structure, with no one agency seen as in charge.

- » **Secure a reputable convener and facilitator.** PNC served as a credible intermediary and convener that was seen as “savvy at organizing” and brought individuals and organizations together that had not collaborated on a large scale previously. As facilitator, CJC engaged and helped align the partners and brought a level of credibility on workforce development issues, which, “helped PNC and the Initiative turn the corner from planning to implementation.”
- » **Build a strong collaborative with relationships across stakeholders.** The Strategic Advisers Group (SAG) brought workforce development expertise to the Initiative on a range of issues and influenced its strategy. Though some SAG members transitioned in and out, a core group of stakeholders remained consistently focused and engaged through the Initiative period, allowing for continuity and cohesive decision making.
- » **Secure commitments of leadership.** “Decentralized leadership” was integral to Opportunity Chicago’s basic operating and management structure, with no one agency seen as in charge. This organic, less formalized structure – i.e., no one agency as the leader – appeared to serve members well as the Initiative unfolded over time, and ultimately achieved many of its goals. Further, respected and consistent leadership, especially at CHA, was essential.
- » **Integrate and align restricted and flexible funds to support innovative program models.** The Initiative faced few obstacles meeting its funding goal and was able to pool and align flexible with less flexible funding to test ideas. Stakeholders agreed this was a collective learning process in which Initiative partners did not always know what would work, but flexible dollars allowed for experimentation that would not have been possible absent a blending of funding.
- » **Learn from mistakes and make corrections.** Initiative partners demonstrated an adaptability that became integral to Opportunity Chicago’s progress. Partners were willing to accept when pilot efforts were not working, to exit pilots that were failing, and to change direction for improved outcomes.



Lessons about Aligning Supply and Demand

- » **Targeting a single population provides advantages and challenges.** An advantage of targeting a single population was that it allowed for funding of, and experimentation with, innovative programs in a somewhat controlled environment of hard-to-serve individuals. Given the lack of evaluation research on services for public housing residents, stakeholders believed the Initiative would contribute important lessons to the field – lessons that ultimately could be transferred to the larger workforce development system. However, employer engagement proved difficult. As the Initiative matured, providers eventually employed a “mainstreaming” approach so that residents would be viewed the same as the general service population. Partnerships were established with existing city workforce sector centers and with other providers focused on workforce training for targeted industries, which better positioned the Initiative to realize greater scale, efficiency and sustainability.
- » **Consider “hooks” and incentives to increase program participation.** As part of its Moving to Work Agreement with HUD, CHA in 2009 implemented a work requirement policy. The policy mandates that all adults aged 18 to 61 living in traditional public housing developments be employed, or engaged in activities that will lead to work, for at least 20 hours per week. The requirement provided a greater “incentive” for residents to engage in workforce development activities, as well as an important framework to focus efforts on all jobseekers, not only those most motivated and eager to work.
- » **Case management and wrap-around supports are essential program elements.** Case management support was seen as an fundamental part of the Initiative’s offerings, and it had a significant bearing on residents’ ability to succeed in the job market. However, some public housing residents had far more serious barriers to work, such as mental and physical health issues, than case management could address in the short term.

Opportunity Chicago did not try to create a new or parallel workforce system, but rather sought to better equip the existing system to support public housing residents.

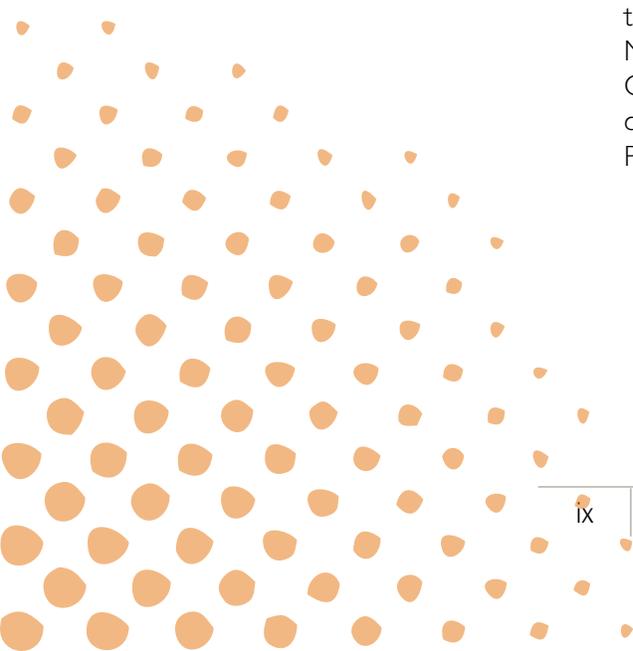
Lessons around Data Collection and Usage

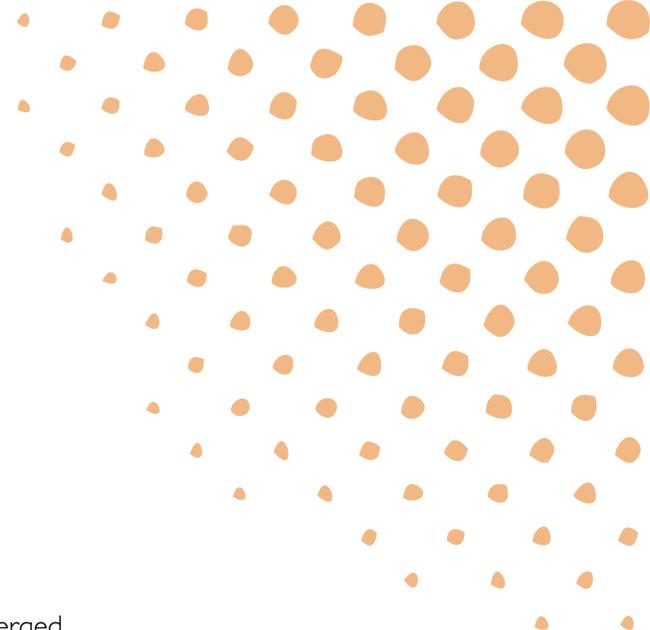
- » **Agree at the outset on how data will be collected, stored, and analyzed.** Opportunity Chicago struggled with how and what types of data should be collected, stored, and analyzed. Over time, SAG members began to identify problems with the data being reported, and the evaluation activities brought data issues to light, leading to some improvements. These generated a better understanding about how to use data and allowed for the gathering and tracking of data through a single system. For example, when CHA implemented FamilyWorks, it began to incorporate workforce development outcomes in all vendor contracts and tied pay to performance.

Lessons about Replicability

Opportunity Chicago did not try to create a new or parallel workforce system, but rather sought to better equip the existing system to support public housing residents. In considering the question of how to replicate this Initiative, issues to consider are:

- » **Moving to Work (MTW) designation is essential, but is not available to all public housing authorities (PHAs).** Having a funding collaborative in place to support housing authority programs is a benefit, but a MTW designation is extremely helpful to a housing agency looking to duplicate the Initiative. Chicago “would not have been able to do the kinds of programming it did without MTW – the money would not have been available.”
- » **An ability to leverage and align resources is critical to maximize impact.** An accessible, flexible stream of funding is important, regardless of the actual funding source. Certain ‘experimental’ programs may not have been prioritized absent this type of funding.
- » **Recruit leadership with the ability to shift (sometimes ineffective) public funds.** The Initiative had champions at many levels and was universally thought of as “necessary in Chicago,” given the Plan for Transformation goals. Mayor Richard M. Daley was a key champion for the Plan and marshaled City resources to support this priority. In early 2012 Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced a recalibration of the Plan for Transformation to reimagine the Plan for the future.





As the Initiative concluded, important indicators of systems change had emerged.

Lessons about Workforce Systems Change

As the Initiative concluded, important indicators of systems change had emerged. While the scale of these early changes is modest, they represent steps in a new direction. Over the longer term, the extent of the gains will depend on how local system actors incorporate the lessons from Opportunity Chicago into their long-term systems reform agenda. Key indicators of change to date include:

- » **There is greater collaboration across a range of partners who did not work together historically.** Key informants agreed that the Initiative has resulted in unprecedented levels of collaboration among city agencies, and this collaboration has resulted in greater access to City workforce services, including WIA and City Colleges, for CHA residents. For CHA as an institution, participation in Opportunity Chicago is seen as having advanced CHA's "connectedness" with other systems and system actors: the agency is "no longer isolated, and others look at CHA differently and have learned to trust the agency."
- » **There is greater attention to the unique needs of public housing residents.** Overall, the Initiative has helped elevate public housing residents as a priority population in the delivery of workforce development services.
- » **Greater alignment and collaboration exists with the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC).** Most Initiative stakeholders agree that the creation and expansion of the CWIC model was influenced by Opportunity Chicago lessons, including its Human Capital Strategy. Lessons learned from the Initiative's Contextualized Literacy and TJ-Literacy programs influenced thinking about the need for stronger literacy-workforce integration, including CWIC's Literacy to Work initiative.

Life after Opportunity Chicago

Opportunity Chicago formally ended at the end of 2010, and PNC concluded in April 2012, as planned. However, while both the Initiative and PNC have been brought to a close, important ongoing work for Initiative partners remains. This includes deepening the early systems alignment, continuing to advance a workforce agenda that prioritizes the needs of the hardest to employ, and building upon opportunities that were not fully – or could not be – maximized during the Initiative's tenure. CHA will continue to invest in FamilyWorks and direct programs, and the recalibration of the Plan for Transformation provides an opportunity to reimagine programs and strategies to support families. Given the slow economic recovery, CHA residents and other disadvantaged workers will likely compete with larger numbers of jobseekers and incumbent workers. Thus, the need is even greater for the types of focused strategies and supports implemented by the Initiative.

- » **Continue to push for systems integration.** At the writing of this report, Cook County's three workforce boards, including Chicago's, were in the process of reconfiguring to become one county-wide board. It is anticipated that the new entity would continue to advance a workforce development agenda that embraces the lessons from Opportunity Chicago and specifically integrates strategies for working with jobseekers who are typically considered hardest to serve, including public housing families.
- » **Reinvention of CCC provides opportunities going forward.** CCC's role as a strong workforce partner was seen as "unfulfilled," and generally did not live up to other Initiative members' and partners' expectations. CCC currently is "reinventing" itself with the goal of remaking the institution and restructuring programs and services to ensure better educational and employment outcomes for all enrollees. Reinvention presents an opportunity to look at ways that CCC might position itself as a workforce leader to better serve and target programs to hard-to-serve population groups, including public housing residents.
- » **Many residents are not suitable candidates for WIA-funded programs; given emphasis on meeting outcome targets, providers may be reluctant to work with the hardest-to-serve.** Some Initiative partners worry that absent the Initiative's singular focus on public housing residents, no system will validate and support a continued focus on residents' workforce needs. And, although DFSS is generally better aligned to serve public housing residents, political and leadership changes as a result of a new City administration have triggered uncertainty about whether improvements will be institutionalized. Federal funding cuts and questions about the future of WIA further exacerbate these concerns.



While both Opportunity Chicago and The Partnership for New Communities have been brought to a close, important ongoing work for Initiative partners remains.

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Introduction & Overview

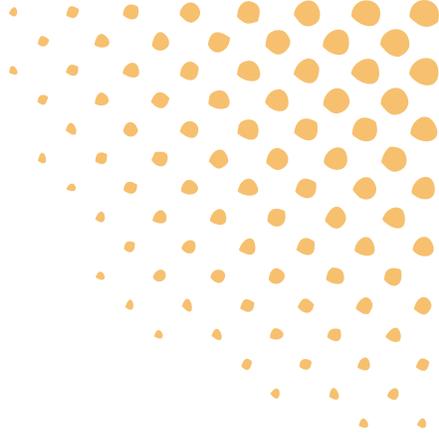


What is Opportunity Chicago?

Opportunity Chicago was a pioneering attempt to help 5,000 public housing residents prepare for and find employment over five years, improving the workforce development system along the way to create a smoother path for other low-skilled, low-income jobseekers to come. Founded jointly in 2006 by The Partnership for New Communities (PNC), the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) (formerly the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development), Opportunity Chicago (the Initiative) appointed the Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) to facilitate and manage the Initiative and created a Strategic Advisers Group (SAG) to help develop and guide the overall strategy.

Opportunity Chicago's leaders took action driven by two key facts: Chicago's public housing residents struggled to connect to employment, and the public workforce development system struggled to provide the kinds of services residents needed. The Initiative's comprehensive approach addressed both issues – and with a sense of urgency, due to a new requirement mandating that residents be employed in order to be eligible for certain housing.

Now, five years later, Opportunity Chicago has much to tell us about the successes and challenges of advancing public housing residents toward stable employment, the formation of partnerships and collaborative efforts, engaging employers, and aligning public and private resources to support a common goal.



Goals and Strategic Priorities

Opportunity Chicago was designed and launched during a period of significant change at CHA, which was several years into its massive Plan for Transformation (the Plan). Adopted in 2000, the Plan was a nationally unprecedented overhaul of Chicago's public housing. A cornerstone of the Plan was the demolition of thousands of distressed public housing units and the construction of new mixed-income developments in their place. Recognizing that transforming public housing went beyond bricks and mortar, in 2009 CHA instituted a work requirement¹ for adult residents to be eligible to live in the mixed-income communities. (Some residents, such as the elderly and disabled, were exempt from this rule.) Thus, Opportunity Chicago focused attention on public housing residents' labor force attachment.

Opportunity Chicago, at the outset, established the following strategic priorities:

1. Promote the development and expansion of employment skills and training programs (including bridge programs and transitional employment);
2. Engage employers in the design and implementation of sector or industry-based partnerships;
3. Advocate for public policy changes to improve the workforce development system's capacity to help low-skilled, low-income individuals earn family-supporting incomes;
4. Expand and/or enhance the existing service delivery system to maximize employment opportunities; and
5. Evaluate and document the Initiative's effectiveness and its replicable lessons.

The Plan for Transformation

The largest and most ambitious reconstruction of public housing in the country's history, Chicago's Plan for Transformation launched in 2000 and called for the demolition of notorious high-rise developments, the comprehensive rehabilitation of all the other scattered-site, senior and lower-density family properties, and the construction of new mixed-income/mixed-finance developments. The Plan's guiding principle is the comprehensive integration of low-income families into the larger physical, social and economic fabric of the city.

Opportunity Chicago: Key Partners and Roles

Chicago Housing Authority: CHA was a major funder and strategist for Opportunity Chicago. It invested \$13.2 million in Initiative programs and realigned itself internally to support broader initiative goals.

The Partnership for New Communities: A time-limited funder collaborative created to support the goals of The Plan for Transformation, PNC co-founded Opportunity Chicago and was a lead funder and strategist for the Initiative. PNC helped staff the Initiative and granted and administered \$4.8 million in Opportunity Chicago programs.

Chicago Jobs Council: Local nonprofit Chicago Jobs Council utilized its expertise and credibility to administer and facilitate the Initiative. CJC is a coalition of community-based training organizations, advocacy groups, businesses and individuals working toward ensuring access to employment and career advancement opportunities for people living in poverty.

Over time, these priorities were refined to better reflect lessons learned, but the core goals remained largely unchanged. For example, while the approach to engaging employers evolved over the life of the Initiative, and the strategies that were deployed also evolved, the underlying goal of engaging employers in a meaningful way in the Initiative did not change.

Initiative Structure and Management

The Initiative was collaborative by design, with PNC, CHA and CJC at the coordinating center. Staffing of the Initiative was lean; neither PNC nor CJC had more than two individuals assigned to the Initiative at any one time. Housed at The Partnership for New Communities and facilitated by the Chicago Jobs Council, the Initiative's partners convened the Strategic Advisers Group (SAG) to develop comprehensive, career-focused workforce development strategies for CHA residents. The SAG's role was advisory – to provide expertise and knowledge of best practices, to review Initiative plans and activities, to provide other resources as appropriate, and to advocate for public policy and systems change.

CHA played several crucial roles in the Initiative. As a funder, CHA used its Moving to Work² designation to channel significant resources to support both direct programs and administration and staff support. CHA also realigned itself internally to expand the capacity of its resident services staff, and place a greater emphasis on outcomes-oriented workforce development initiatives. Finally, while CHA made certain independent decisions about key agency operations, it used Opportunity Chicago's structure to discuss and communicate key workforce-related policy issues to align with broader Initiative goals.

Key Strategies and Interventions

In an effort to improve the employment prospects of job-seeking public housing residents, the Initiative invested in and tested a range of program offerings and strategies: FamilyWorks (and Service Connector before that); Transitional Jobs; Bridge Programs and Technical Skills Training through the City Colleges of Chicago; Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs through DFSS; Industry Skills Training focused on targeted sectors; and Contextualized Literacy Programs.

FamilyWorks:

FamilyWorks is a voluntary comprehensive case management program available to CHA's public housing resident population. Starting in June 2008, FamilyWorks case managers from six provider organizations replaced the Service Connector system to provide more comprehensive wrap-around services, referrals to the programs available in Chicago's social services network, including all Opportunity Chicago programs, and job placement and retention services. This new strategy was in direct response to the recognition that the Service Connector model was not well suited to helping CHA residents attain and retain employment. In fact, it was not originally designed to achieve explicit workforce outcomes. In contrast, all FamilyWorks contractors were expected to incorporate case management, employment assistance, education and training, children and youth services, housing, clinical and wellness services, and senior supportive services into their implementation plan.³

Opportunity Chicago: Strategic Advisers Group

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Chicago Department of Community Development
Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
Chicago Housing Authority
Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC)/
Chicago Workforce Board
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce
City Colleges of Chicago
City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor
The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The Partnership for New Communities
U.S. Department of Labor
Women Employed

CHA FamilyWorks

FamilyWorks is a voluntary, comprehensive case management program used by the Chicago Housing Authority to help its residents maximize their potential and improve their quality of life. The program both provides direct services and links residents to other resources they might need. FamilyWorks serves about 10,000 households, of which 75 percent are utilizing services at any given time.

Launched in 2009, FamilyWorks represents an evolution of CHA's resident services. Prior to the Plan for Transformation, programs were disconnected, a large in-house staff handled direct services, and little was known about residents' needs.

Over the course of the Plan, the CHA has developed a more efficient, effective system anchored by intensive case management delivered by a network of six external providers around the city. FamilyWorks emphasizes employment and economic independence, takes a whole-family approach, and prioritizes quality data to better understand residents, programs, and outcomes.

Through FamilyWorks, specialized case managers and employment staff were responsible for conducting job preparation training (soft skills), direct placement, employment retention, and referrals to other services, including job training and education. Case management services focused on helping to meet residents' employment and training needs to move them toward permanent employment, stable housing, and eventual economic self-sufficiency, where possible.

In 2009, approximately three years after the Initiative started, CHA also adopted a work requirement policy that required all non-exempt adult members of the household (18-61 years old) to work or be engaged in eligible activities that would lead to employment.⁴ FamilyWorks case management agencies were hired by CHA to help residents meet this requirement so they could exercise final housing choices and be lease compliant. Participation in FamilyWorks case management services was voluntary.

Throughout the Initiative period, 4,532 residents accessed job placement services through FamilyWorks and Service Connector combined. The FamilyWorks model, which is directly managed and funded by CHA, will continue beyond Opportunity Chicago.





Transitional Jobs:

Born out of a recognition that intensive employment skills programming and placement services should be tailored to the special needs of the hardest-to-employ public housing residents, Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs combined skill development, supportive services, and temporary, subsidized employment placements to help residents with little or no work history transition into the labor market.

The Initiative provided a framework for the development and integration of resources to support the administration and delivery of transitional jobs services to residents. Initiative partners (CHA and PNC) invested approximately \$10.6 million in Transitional Jobs programs, funding nine TJ providers over the course of the Initiative, and pioneering new TJ program models through PNC's private, flexible funds.

Opportunity Chicago exceeded its TJ goal of connecting 1,000 public housing residents to unsubsidized employment, despite operating during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Eighty percent of participants with subsidized placements made the transition to unsubsidized employment, and fifty-two percent of TJ participants saw an increase in the percentage of quarters they worked after exiting the TJ program. However, attachment to unsubsidized employment remained a struggle for some participants, especially those with no work history prior to entering the TJ program. Poor economic conditions throughout most of the Initiative's tenure likely impacted these participants' employment outcomes to some extent.

A companion report, "[The Promise and Challenge of Transitional Jobs: Opportunity Chicago's Transitional Jobs Experience](#)," discusses Transitional Jobs programs in greater detail.

Bridge and Technical Skills Training Programs through City Colleges of Chicago (CCC):

CCC programs included a variety of career programs with technical-occupational skills training (certificate and advanced certificate programs) in addition to more traditional Associate Degree programs. CCC also offered GED, ESL and Career Bridge Programs for those who needed to improve their reading and math skills while preparing to enter the workforce. Through Career Bridge, students prepared for entry into a particular career sector (like healthcare) by learning the vocabulary and basic concepts necessary for success in that field. These services were funded through an intergovernmental agreement between CHA and CCC, which allowed residents to enroll in CCC programs at no cost to them.

Over the life of the Initiative, 1,403 residents participated in a range of CCC programs, including Technical Training, Remediation and Bridge Programs.⁵

Opportunity Chicago engaged with mature partners who were already involved in this sector work and who had significant other funding beyond the Initiative's resources.

Workforce Investment Act Services (WIA):

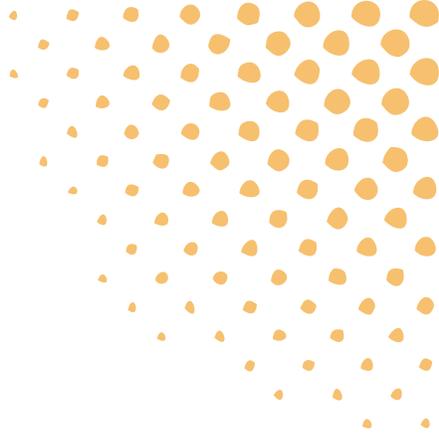
WIA services were provided through a system of partners and are divided into three levels as mandated by federal law: universal services, intensive services, and training. Universal services included access to job listings, self-guided resume and interviewing preparation, and career planning and exploration tools, among others. Intensive services included skills assessments, assistance with barriers to employment, case management, career development, and job retention/ advancement assistance. Technical training was provided through a range of approved providers, including CCC, and CHA residents accessed this training by using Individual Training Accounts (ITA) made available through DFSS.

Throughout the Initiative, 493 residents participated in WIA-funded training or job placement/career development services.

Industry Skills Training:

Industry Skills Training targeted training efforts in specific high-demand industries and sectors, which initially included: transportation/warehousing/logistics (TWL), healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, and basic office skills training. Each targeted sector had an Opportunity Chicago-supported partner organization responsible for involving employers in the design and implementation of workforce partnerships and training tailored to specific job opportunities. Over time, TWL was terminated due to a lack of resident interest and low participation, and basic office/computer skills was shifted to the Initiative's basic skills training service offerings.

The Initiative concentrated on the remaining sectors and later expanded its focus to include information technology and emerging green industries. These sectors originally were chosen for their projected growth potential and the range of entry-level job opportunities for lower-skilled workers. In each of the sectors, Opportunity Chicago engaged with mature partners who were already involved in this sector work and who had significant other funding beyond the Initiative's resources – for example, ManufacturingWorks (manufacturing), ServiceWorks (hospitality/services sectors, including retail, restaurants, and hotels), Central States SER (healthcare) and TEC Services (IT). In fact, the Initiative's funding was intended to supplement their work to include public housing residents. Importantly, this sector-based strategy attracted national attention and funding from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.⁶ A total of 345 residents participated in one or more Industry Skills programs.



Though not part of the original program design, the inclusion of contextualized literacy in the menu of program offerings represents an example of the evolution of Opportunity Chicago – continuous adaptation to respond to emerging lessons and resident needs.

Contextualized Literacy Services:

Though not part of the original program design, the inclusion of contextualized literacy in the menu of program offerings represents an example of the evolution of Opportunity Chicago – continuous adaptation to respond to emerging lessons and resident needs. Aimed at CHA's working-age residents with reading levels between the 4th and 9th grades, literacy services were contextualized to targeted sectors and occupations, with supportive services and established linkages to employers resulting in direct employment placements. Contextualized literacy was introduced because stand-alone literacy classes were not producing strong results.

Three providers/programs were originally categorized as contextualized literacy: Association House, LEED Council and Central States SER. The three programs were funded beginning September 2007 but didn't become fully operational until 2008. Consequently, program enrollment was modest (64 residents participated), and some analyses of resident-level outcomes described later in this report exclude this program. In several cases the contextualized literacy models were combined with other models. For example, Association House added a TJ component, and Central States SER's program was contextualized to lead to certifications and jobs in the healthcare sector.

In implementing these strategies and approaches, the Initiative embraced several key tenets: 1) leverage the local system to the greatest extent possible (for example, by maximizing CHA's intergovernmental agreement with the City Colleges of Chicago and harnessing WIA funding for employment training); 2) partner with institutions and providers that exhibit the greatest potential; and 3) integrate individual programs and continuously adapt and change in response to lessons and failures.

Target Population and Participant Profile

The Initiative exclusively focused on residents living in CHA developments as of October 1999, when the Plan for Transformation began. Residents' participation in Opportunity Chicago programs, including those directly funded by CHA, was voluntary, and residents primarily accessed services through a case manager affiliated with one of the FamilyWorks (initially Service Connectors) contractors located throughout the city.

Based on available CHA administrative data, the typical Initiative participant was 35 years old, non-Hispanic, African American, and female. More than half of participants (57 percent) had at least a high school degree, 4 percent were seniors (65 and older), and 12 percent were disabled. Across all Initiative participants (and including all sources of income), the median household income was \$14,359. More than a third (36 percent) of participants received wage income, with median annual wage earnings of \$14,897. Participants also received income from a variety of non-wage sources: 16 percent received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 16 percent received General Assistance, 10 percent received Social Security Insurance (SSI/SSDI), 9 percent received unemployment insurance, 8 percent received child support, and 6 percent received Social Security (SS).⁷

Resources

The Initiative's goal was to secure sufficient funding to start the Initiative, with an explicit understanding that Opportunity Chicago would be time limited and terminate after a set period of time (originally three years, and then extended to five). PNC's role was not to provide funding upfront, but first to determine what resources were needed to achieve the Initiative's goals. Then, each public agency partner was to identify how it could access available funding to pay for Initiative services. Private funding would fill resource gaps, fund innovation and support Initiative management and evaluation. The original plan was to identify and/or raise \$23 million. These funds would be pooled and aligned with public and more restrictive funds.

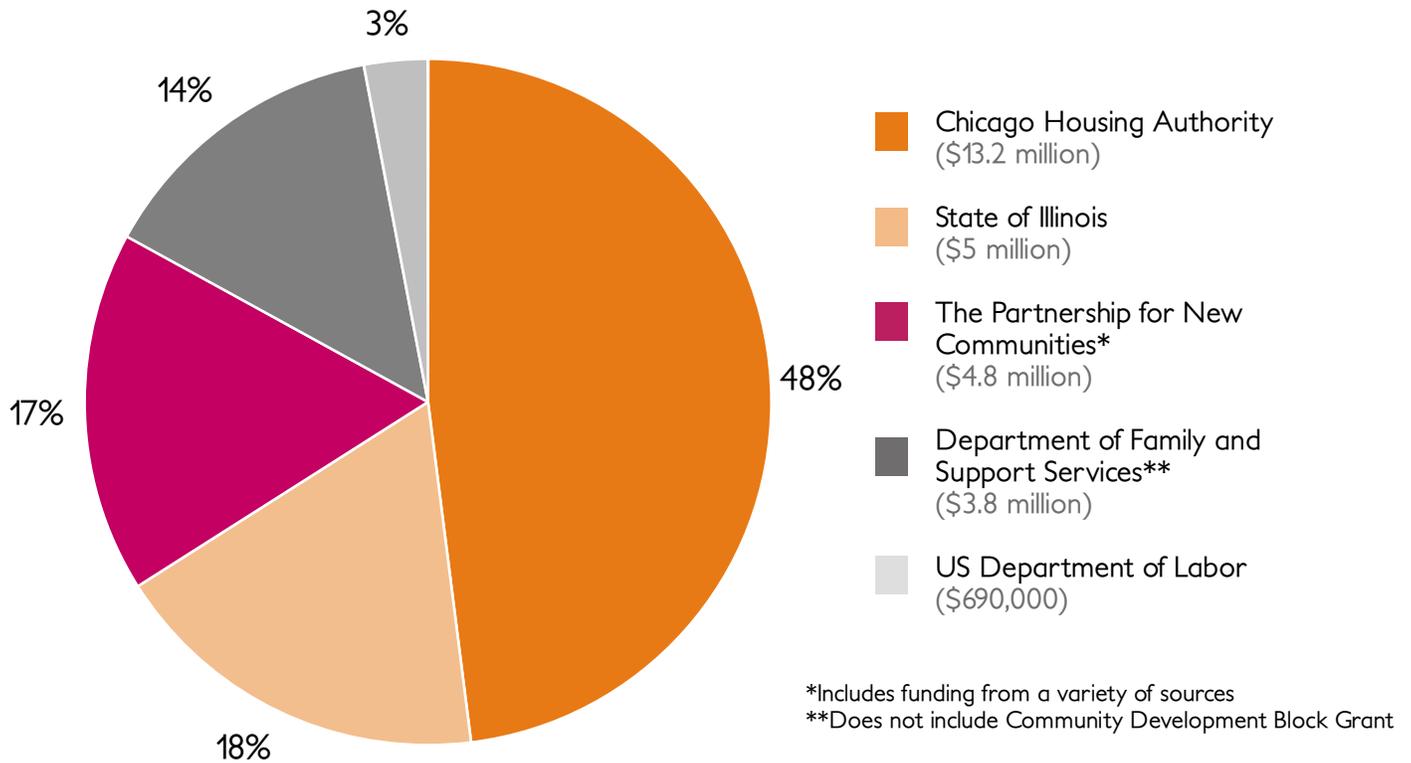
Opportunity Chicago ultimately raised and expended more than \$27 million from a combination of public and private sources. In addition, CHA marshaled significant additional resources and directly funded the FamilyWorks case management contractors, resident supports, employment and vocational training programs, a data tracking system, and Transitional Jobs programs. These additional investments by CHA resulted in more than \$80 million of leveraged and aligned funding over five years.

In September 2007, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) selected Opportunity Chicago as one of 32⁸ regional funding collaboratives to participate in this new national effort (it was selected as one of ten initial sites). Opportunity Chicago's



Exhibit 1.

Total Revenue 2006-2010: \$27.5 million



Source: Opportunity Chicago Web site

participation in NFWS focused on sector-based partnerships including manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare and IT. The Initiative's original strategy of using Industry Specialists was not as successful as hoped, and with NFWS funding, the Initiative invested modest funding into existing city-wide sector-based One Stop centers (ManufacturingWorks and ServiceWorks) and other existing industry training programs to expand their programs to CHA residents. The relationship with NFWS also provided opportunities for the Initiative and its sector-based training partners to learn from similar programs across the country.

Most of the Initiative's funding supported direct program services, with less than five percent used for administration, communications and evaluation.

Systems Change

Opportunity Chicago's goal was to identify employment barriers within the system and to reduce those barriers by creating processes that would result in a smoother and more streamlined path to employment for CHA residents. The Initiative identified the following systems issues: 1) inadequate systems for communicating information about service and employment opportunities; 2) organizational silos; 3) service fragmentation and duplication; 4) job placement services not well tailored to the needs of public housing residents; 5) difficulty accessing services; and 6) systems policies that result in disincentives for residents to seek and maintain employment. Central to the Initiative's strategy was to work within existing systems and with existing partners to push for change – FamilyWorks for case management

and resident support, DFSS to access WIA-funded programs, Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC) to push for greater focus on low-wage workers, and working with stable and funded workforce providers to test innovative ideas that could be adopted.

As the Initiative concluded, early indicators of change were emerging. Systems change accomplishments are still in progress, and it will be some time still before the extent of institutional changes are known. Looking ahead, the enduring impact of the Initiative's progress will depend on how local system actors incorporate the lessons from Opportunity Chicago into their long-term systems reform agendas.

Management Information System

CHA invested considerable resources in the development and maintenance of a database for use by all CHA contractors, including those involved in Opportunity Chicago. The database, created on the Salesforce platform, was a basic case management referral system not originally designed for workforce

development purposes. The decentralized nature of the database – i.e. the lack of common data dictionary across all vendors and of standardized fields for data entry – initially resulted in data entry and quality issues that rendered most of the resident-level data unusable for evaluation purposes during the first two years of the Initiative. Further, PNC maintained separate data (using Excel spreadsheets) on PNC-funded projects, and these were not initially integrated into the CHA system, often resulting in inconsistencies.

During the transition from Service Connector to FamilyWorks, CHA significantly revamped the system to 1) integrate a consistent assessment tool, 2) define indicators that would be used consistently across all providers, 3) integrate PNC-funded projects, and 4) track workforce outcomes. All providers could enter data in 'real time,' thus providing CHA regularly updated information. By the end of the Initiative, the system was greatly improved and CHA had adopted a performance-based system that required vendors to report outcomes into the new system. CHA also invested in dedicated data staff to review and mine the data on a regular basis.



Resident-Level Outcomes



Opportunity Chicago was launched at an inauspicious time amidst economic uncertainty and employment instability, followed by a recession that pummeled economic activity and employment. As the ranks of unemployed Chicagoans increased over the life of the Initiative, CHA residents were forced to compete with larger numbers of jobseekers, who often had better qualifications, more consistent work records, and fewer barriers to employment. As a result, Opportunity Chicago's challenge was to increase programmatic capacity in order to, first, reach participation goals, and second, to develop programs that would assist CHA residents entering an increasingly competitive job market.

In response to those challenges, Opportunity Chicago developed a range of program offerings to meet the diverse needs of the target population. Between 2006 and 2010, the Initiative, combined with CHA direct funding, awarded grants to a variety of providers to educate, train and place CHA residents into employment. The Initiative paired education and training programs with comprehensive wrap-around services and case management intended to support participants and help ensure they successfully completed the programs.

At the time Opportunity Chicago was launched in 2006, the unemployment rate in the Chicago Metropolitan Area stood at 4.5 percent, while in Chicago it was 5.5 percent (Exhibit 2).⁹ The unemployment rate rose markedly throughout the rest of the decade, climbing to 11 percent in 2010. For

African-American females, the majority group among Initiative participants, the unemployment rate was far higher than for the regional average. In 2006, unemployment among African-American females was 16.7 percent,¹⁰ more than triple that of the regional average. By 2009, almost two years into the economic downturn, the unemployment rate for African-American females soared to 18.7 percent. The jobless rate among African-American women remained persistently higher than regional jobless rates through 2010, when it reached 23.5 percent.

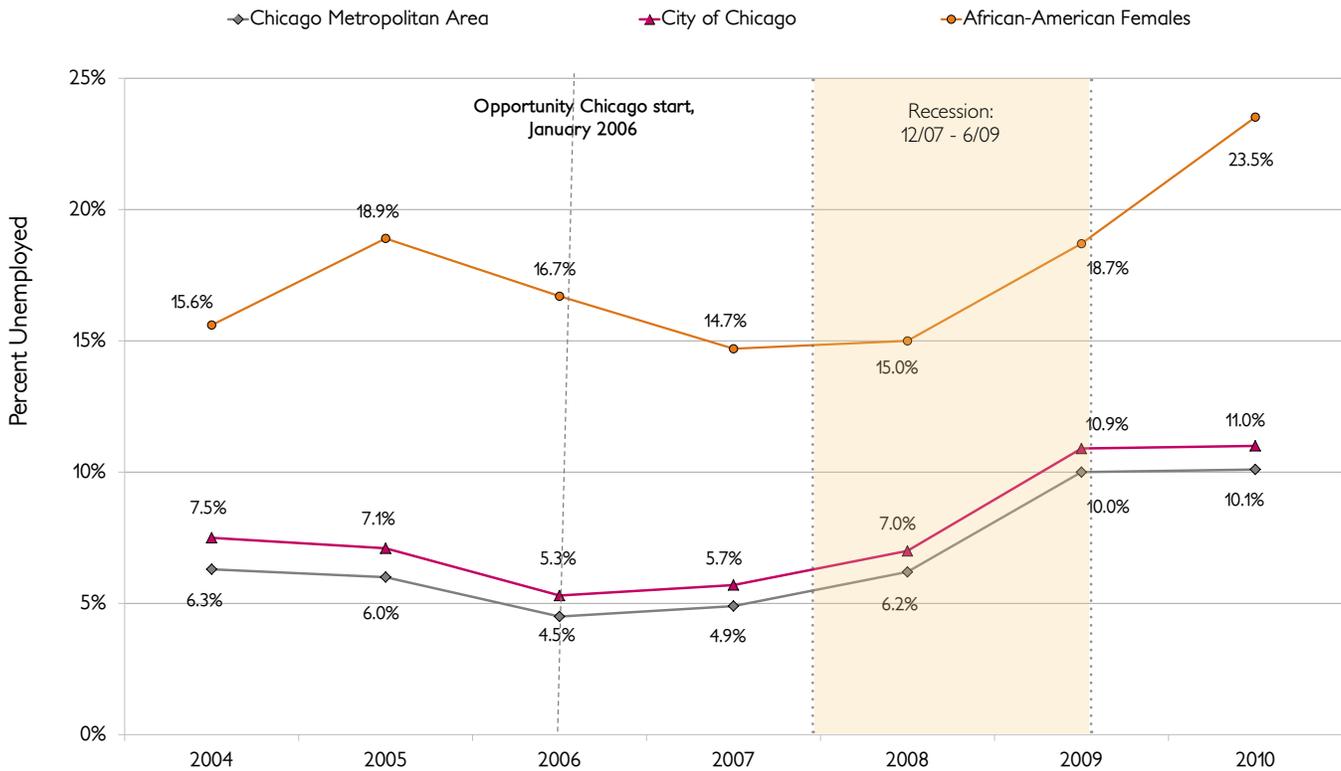
This outcomes analysis looks at six types of programs that received support from Opportunity Chicago to provide CHA residents with job readiness training, subsidized employment opportunities, contextualized literacy training, customized skills training, case management, and/or bridge programs.

More than 6,700 CHA residents participated in the Initiative.

Across the six Initiative-funded program types, 6,743 CHA residents participated in at least one program. Some types of programs touched a large proportion of participants, while only a small number of CHA residents enrolled in others (Exhibit 3). For example, while 67 percent of Initiative participants received job placement assistance from FamilyWorks/Service Connector staff, less than one percent of participants enrolled in a Contextualized Literacy program during the Initiative period. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of participants accessed more than one program type;

Exhibit 2.

Unemployment Rates of Chicago African-American Females Compared with General Population



Source: American Community Survey and Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

about half (48 percent) of participants received case management services to find a job placement but did not enroll in any training program. It should be noted that variations in program participation were due, in large part, to programs' capacity limitations. In addition, programs had different lengths and started at different times. The Contextualized Literacy program, for example, did not ramp up until 2008, more than halfway through the Initiative, and had very few slots available. Additionally, participation in any program was entirely voluntary, and not all programs were available to everyone.

Seventy-seven percent of participants worked after program exit.¹¹

A key goal of Opportunity Chicago was to positively impact the employment outcomes of CHA residents who participated in Initiative-funded programs. This evaluation measures employment outcomes using Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) data that reports on quarterly employment and earnings. For the purposes of this evaluation, employment after exit is defined as having worked in one or more quarters after program exit – i.e., between the last quarter they left an Initiative program and the second quarter of 2011.

Against daunting odds, Opportunity Chicago placed over 5,000 public housing residents into employment, exceeding its goal.

Exhibit 3.

Employment Rates of Participants, by Program Type¹

Program type	# of participants	# who worked after exit ²	% who worked after exit
All Participants (unique individuals)	6,743	5,185	77%
FamilyWorks/Service Connector Case Management ³	4,532	3,720	82%
Transitional Jobs	1,793	1,359	76%
City Colleges of Chicago ⁴	1,403	989	70%
WIA Participants	493	377	66%
Industry Skills	345	245	71%
Contextualized Literacy	64	35	55%

¹ A more detailed table with a breakdown of participation by provider and by program type is included in the Appendix.

² For all programs except FamilyWorks or Service Connector placement assistance, exit represents the last exit date a participant had from any part of the program. For FamilyWorks/Service Connector the exit date represents the same quarter that a participant's job placement started - i.e., the point at which the placement assistance stopped.

³ Participants who received job placement assistance through a FamilyWorks or Service Connector Case Manager.

⁴ Excludes 236 City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) participants (10%) who did not have a SSN and could not be matched to IDES data. In addition, participants exclude about 1,000 CCC students who participated in orientation but did not enroll in additional coursework or training.

Note: Some participants engaged in more than one program type, therefore the sum across program types does not equal the numbers reported in the "All Participants" row.

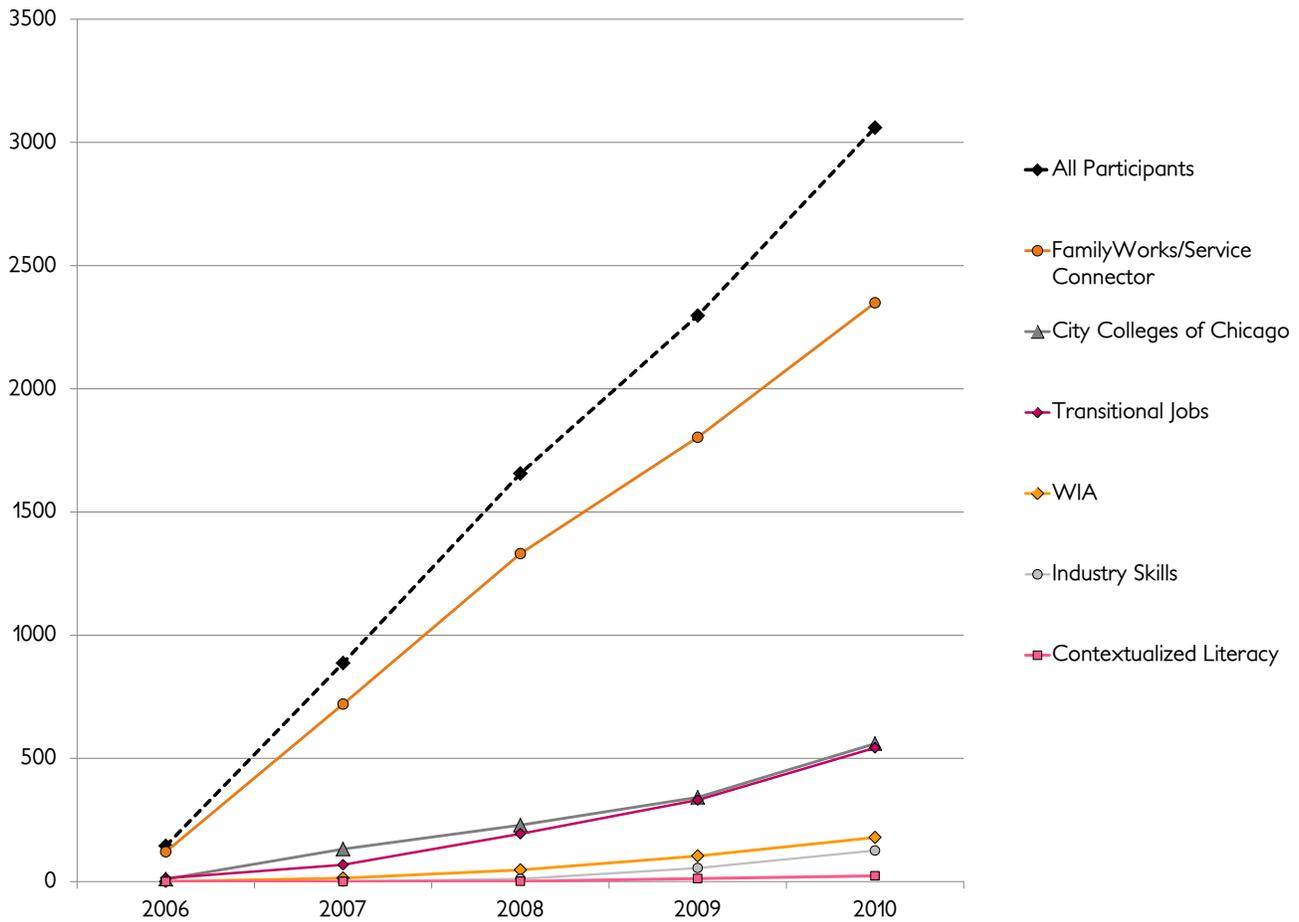
Source: Analysis of IDES and Salesforce data

As shown in Exhibit 3, 77 percent of participants worked after program exit. Employment rates among participants varied by program type. Those who received assistance finding a job through case management had the highest employment rate. Contextualized literacy participants had the lowest employment rate, in part because it was the smallest and newest of the program types, and focused on literacy gains – rather than employment – as a primary goal. In looking at employment rates across programs, it is important to note that each program served a different target population and had a different design, which makes comparisons difficult.

Those who received assistance finding a job through case management had the highest employment rate.

Exhibit 4.

Number of Participants Who Worked after Program Exit, by Year and Program Type



Source: Analysis of IDES and Salesforce data.

The number of participants who worked increased in every year of the program, despite the flagging economy.

The Initiative was successful in increasing participation in each year of the Initiative, both overall and in every individual program. Moreover, the number of program participants who worked also increased in every year, despite the economic downturn (Exhibit 4).

This latter finding is especially notable given that it is likely that better prepared jobseekers within the CHA resident population secured employment earlier in the program period, while residents with more barriers to employment were being placed in jobs toward the

end of the Initiative. In other words, rising numbers of participants found employment during a time when the economic climate was further deteriorating and the members of the target population were relatively more disadvantaged in labor-market terms.

Overall, 45 percent of participants saw an increase in the percentage of quarters worked.

From a workforce development standpoint, the CHA resident population is not homogeneous; likewise, the employment experiences of Initiative participants vary, with some residents having significant employment histories and many experiencing long-term spells of

unemployment and labor market inactivity. Therefore, to analyze the impact of Initiative programs on the employability of CHA residents, it is necessary to isolate the employment outcomes for the various subgroups within the overall target population.¹²

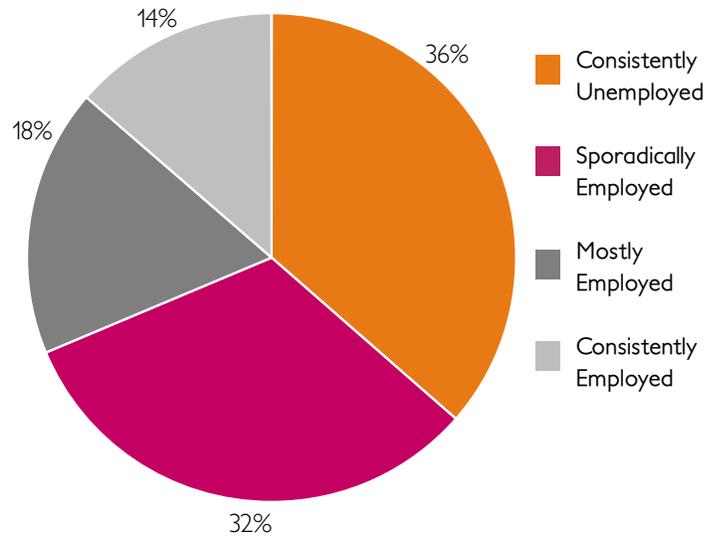
In keeping with the intended design of the Initiative, participants were categorized by employment experience (Consistently Employed, Mostly Employed, Sporadically Employed and Chronically Unemployed). Sixty-eight percent of participants were either consistently unemployed or sporadically employed at program entry (Exhibit 5).

To assess the impact of Opportunity Chicago program offerings on the employment and earnings of participants who had exited a program, the employment status of participants during the two years prior to program entry was compared to that of participants following their last program exit. Overall, 49 percent saw an increase in the percentage of quarters they worked, and 23 percent saw a decrease in the percentage of quarters worked.

Looking specifically at the 36 percent of participants who were consistently unemployed at program entry (Exhibit 6), 48 percent experienced improvements in their employment status after exit (i.e., they worked in at least one quarter after program exit). Conversely, 52 percent remained consistently unemployed after exit. This finding is not entirely unexpected, given that the programs were serving populations with multiple barriers to employment. From an employer's perspective, hiring an applicant with no work experience in the prior two years is an undesirable option, especially given that rising unemployment rates increased the number of recently unemployed

Exhibit 5.

Employment Status of Participants at Program Entry



Source: Analysis of IDES data.

Consistently employed:
Someone who worked in all possible quarters

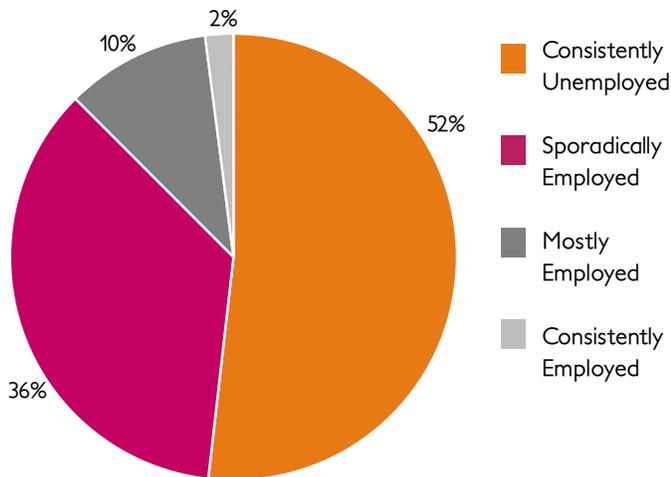
Mostly employed:
Someone who worked in 50-99 percent of possible quarters

Sporadically employed:
Someone who worked in 1-49 percent of possible quarters

Consistently unemployed:
Someone who did not work in any of the possible quarters

Exhibit 6.

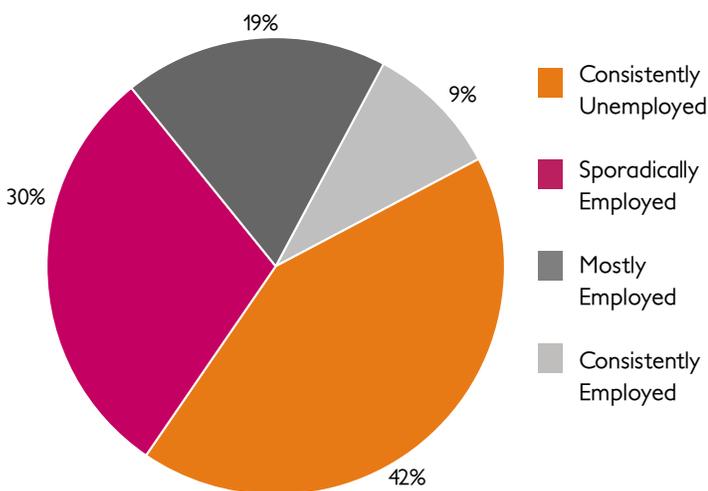
Employment Status of Participants after Program Exit: Consistently Unemployed at Program Entry



Source: Analysis of IDES data.

Exhibit 7.

Employment Status of Participants after Program Exit: Sporadically Employed at Program Entry



Source: Analysis of IDES data.

workers available to fill job vacancies. Still, almost half of residents in this employment category saw their employment status improve.

For CHA residents who had stronger work histories, employment outcomes were even better. Of the 32 percent of participants who were sporadically employed during the two years prior to program entry (Exhibit 7), 49 percent saw improvement in their employment status (i.e., they became mostly or consistently employed after exit), and 42 percent remained sporadically employed after exit. Again, this finding is not entirely unexpected. Though still encountering significant barriers to employment, sporadically employed residents entering an Initiative program are able to signal to employers better employment qualifications than their consistently unemployed counterparts. As a result, post-program employment rates are higher for this group.

Similarly, those with more consistent employment histories prior to accessing Initiative programs had the strongest employment outcomes after program exit. Among the 18 percent of participants who were mostly employed prior to program entry, 28 percent saw improvement (i.e., they worked every possible quarter after program exit) and 38 percent remained mostly employed. And among the 14 percent of participants who were consistently employed prior to program entry, 58 percent remained consistently employed after program exit.¹³

More than half of all placements were retained for two or more years.

Unlike IDES, data from Salesforce provides specific start and end dates for job placements that allow the calculation of retention for any one job. However, the Salesforce data is susceptible to manual data

Exhibit 8.

Retention among Placements

Retention Milestone	% Placements	# Eligible Placements ¹
30 days	91%	8,377
90 days	70%	8,244
6 months	60%	8,063
1 year	56%	7,001
18 months	55%	6,314
2+ years	54%	5,777

¹ Eligible placements represent the number of participants who were eligible for each retention milestone and serves as the denominator in the calculation of retention by milestone. For example, only those who had started a placement by 12/1/10 are included in the denominator for the percent of placements retained 30 days.

Note: The number of placements differs from the reported number of participants who worked after exit because participants may have had more than one placement. In addition, the two numbers come from different data sources: the number of placements is based on Salesforce data, and the number that worked after exit is based on IDES data.

Source: Analysis of Salesforce data through December 2010.

entry errors that might bias the data to overestimate retention outcomes. For example, if an end date is not entered when a placement ends, retention calculations assume that the client was still employed as of the end of the Initiative. Noting this limitation, the average number of days retained among all placements was 232 days, or about 7.5 months (Exhibit 8). More than half of placements (54 percent) were retained for two or more years. Note that participants might have more than one placement, which is not unexpected.

Participants' employment was largely concentrated in three industry sectors targeted by the Initiative.

Upon entering the workforce, participants' employment was largely concentrated in three industry sectors targeted by the Initiative at the outset: Health Care and Social Assistance (31 percent), Retail Trade (13 percent), and Accommodation and Food Services (10 percent) (Exhibit 9).

The three sectors accounted for 54 percent of all jobs held by participants after they exited an

Exhibit 9.

Median Earnings for Top 10 Industries in which Participants Worked

Industry	% Participant Jobs	Median Quarterly Earnings
Health Care and Social Assistance	31%	\$3,319
Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services	15%	\$3,054
Retail Trade	13%	\$2,810
Accommodation and Food Services	10%	\$2,439
Educational Services	6%	\$4,147
Public Administration	5%	\$3,066
Transportation and Warehousing	5%	\$3,495
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3%	\$3,195
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3%	\$3,450
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2%	\$6,271

Source: Analysis of IDES data

Initiative program, and they continue to rank among the region's high-demand sectors. Although not an Initiative target sector, Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services accounted for the second highest percentage of jobs (15 percent) held by participants and ranks sixth among the Chicago region's top ten employing sectors. Not surprisingly, given the skill levels of participants, the industry sectors in which the largest number of participants secured employment, on balance, tended to be low-paying industries. These low-wage industries had fewer barriers to entry, providing many participants with opportunities for entry-level employment with potential for advancement along a longer-term career pathway. These same industry sectors, however, tend to have high turnover and few benefits at the entry level.

More than half of all participants saw an increase in average earnings.

Overall, when measured in terms of employment rates, the experiences of Initiative participants are mostly positive, with 77 percent of program exiters working at least one quarter following program exit. However, when measured in terms of average quarterly earnings, the results are mixed. On the one hand, participants saw substantial increases in average quarterly earnings as a whole and across all programs (Exhibit 10). Notably, more than half (59 percent) of Initiative participants saw

an increase in average quarterly earnings from before program entry to after program exit.

When pre-program entry median quarterly earnings are compared to post-exit earnings, participants who worked experienced a jump in median quarterly earnings from \$1,849 before program entry to \$2,688 following program exit (a 45 percent increase). Participants in Transitional Jobs and Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, as well as those who received placement assistance through a case manager, experienced relatively large increases in earnings (64 percent, 54 percent, and 51 percent respectively). These increases are especially notable given the poor state of the regional economy.

Overall earnings levels remain low. Extrapolating from median quarterly earnings levels to compute annual incomes reveals that for an Opportunity Chicago participant who received the average quarterly earnings across four quarters, annual earnings would total just \$10,752, below the 2010 poverty level for a family of two.¹⁴ As noted above, the industry sectors in which most participants found employment tended to offer entry points for people with low skills and limited work history. However, those entry-level jobs tend to provide low wages.

Exhibit 10.

Comparison of Average Median Quarterly Earnings Before Program Entry and After Program Exit

Program	Pre-Program Entry Median	Pre-Program Entry Range	Post-Program Exit Median	Post-Program Exit Range	% Change between Entry and Exit Median
Program Participants	\$1,849	\$100 - \$48,479	\$2,688	\$102 - \$55,071	45%
Transitional Jobs	\$1,230	\$100 - \$16,445	\$2,019	\$102 - \$42,662	64%
City Colleges of Chicago	\$2,421	\$101 - \$21,084	\$2,880	\$107 - \$42,361	19%
Industry Skills	\$1,873	\$109 - \$12,952	\$2,110	\$113 - \$13,723	13%
FamilyWorks/Service Connector	\$1,858	\$101 - \$48,479	\$2,800	\$102 - \$55,071	51%
WIA	\$2,345	\$146 - \$13,929	\$3,613	\$110 - \$25,874	54%

Note: Excludes participants with less than \$100 in average quarterly earnings. The Contextualized Literacy program is excluded because only 29 participants worked after exit.

Source: Analysis of IDES data

Findings and Lessons



Opportunity Chicago brought together key workforce leaders to tackle the problem of limited or spotty workforce attachment by public housing residents. The Initiative contended with a difficult local economy that magnified the challenges of working with a population characterized by high numbers of chronically unemployed residents and residents with challenges such as low literacy skills. In spite of these challenges, the Initiative demonstrated success on a number of employment outcomes, and it provides important lessons regarding Initiative management, workforce partnerships, employer engagement, and workforce systems alignment and change. This section highlights qualitative findings and lessons.

Management and Partnerships

Abandon individual silos and agendas and work together on a single goal and collective approach.

The Initiative was organized around a single plan and simple, quantifiable goals. The Plan for Transformation was a visible and clear rallying point to organize partners and stakeholders. The absence of a workforce strategy within the Plan provided the agenda to develop a collective approach, and Initiative partners established a measurable goal (to place 5,000 public housing residents into jobs in five years). Having a clear, quantifiable goal, a target population, and a highly visible plan made it easier for partners to commit and to come together around shared goals.

Secure a reputable convener and facilitator. PNC served as a credible intermediary and convener that was seen as “savvy at organizing” and brought individuals and organizations together that had not

collaborated on a large scale previously. PNC was viewed as critical to building sustainable relationships across diverse stakeholders, relationships that are likely to continue after PNC dissolves in early 2012.

PNC’s credibility was attributable in part to the “leadership of an executive director with private sector experience asking the right questions,” and was also seen as a neutral party. In its convener role, PNC paved the way for relationship building among foundations and influenced how public-private stakeholders interacted both within and outside the framework of the Initiative. Having a credible convener made it easier for stakeholders to “plant roots” by providing both a place to encourage sustained engagement by stakeholders and a formal structure to transact Initiative business. On the funding side, PNC was seen as an important vehicle through which to pool public and private sector dollars and ultimately funnel those investments to creative and more effective workforce development programs.

The Chicago Community Trust served as a respected philanthropic partner and “home” for PNC and the Initiative. The Trust lent PNC credibility among other collaborative members, gave structure to the Initiative in its infancy, and provided a stable funding environment and neutral territory within which the Initiative could operate. This was important because although the Initiative was an outgrowth of CHA and the Plan for Transformation, PNC was established to provide broader support for CHA and the Plan within the business and civic communities in Chicago.

CJC’s commitment to workforce development issues that affect disadvantaged jobseekers positioned it



as a neutral, outside party and ideal facilitator. CJC was responsible for convening the Strategic Advisers Group and its working groups. More importantly it kept the various partners engaged and aligned, and ensured that the projects and programs maintained forward momentum. As a neutral party, it was able to solicit important feedback from the Initiative's workforce training providers, many of which are CJC members. Informants interviewed indicated that CJC brought a level of credibility to the Initiative on workforce development issues, which, "helped PNC and the Initiative turn the corner from planning to implementation."

Build a strong collaborative with relationships across stakeholders. The Strategic Advisers Group (SAG) brought Opportunity Chicago workforce development expertise on a range of issues and influenced its strategies. Although the SAG functioned independently of PNC and CJC, PNC's executive director was central to organizing and engaging SAG members. While the Initiative struggled to keep some SAG members actively engaged over time, as members transitioned in and out, a core group of stakeholders remained consistently focused and engaged through the Initiative period. This allowed for continuity and cohesive decision making.

Secure commitments of leadership. "Decentralized leadership" was integral to Opportunity Chicago's basic operating and management structure and helped to advance Initiative goals and decisions. For most stakeholders, it was important that no one agency was seen as the leader. It was also important that larger, well-known and highly regarded members of the foundation community committed resources and personnel to the Initiative, lending it credibility.

However, the collaborative was not without challenges. In the beginning Initiative leadership and structure were somewhat loose and ill-defined, and clear authority and direction were lacking. In addition, the Initiative experienced numerous leadership changes early on, specifically at head and division levels at CHA in addition to several CJC staff transitions. This resulted in two dynamics: 1) some partners and stakeholders did not feel they understood how their participation added value; and 2) some stakeholders had difficulty prioritizing Opportunity Chicago.

One stakeholder recalled that, "the management structure was tenuous ... If one partner took the lead or asserted control, the collaborative may have dissolved early on." Partners expressed the need for a leader to be responsible for designating roles for partners and to be responsible for directing collaborative efforts regarding strategy and holding partners accountable. However, this organic, less formalized structure – i.e.,



no one agency as the leader – appeared to serve members well as the Initiative unfolded over time, and ultimately achieved many of its goals.

Another important observation is the need for visionary leadership, especially at CHA. In 2007 CHA hired a new Executive Vice President of Resident Services who had significant workforce experience. She already had been involved in Opportunity Chicago through her prior work with the City and the Chicago Workforce Board, and thus provided a consistent voice throughout the Initiative. She was seen as instrumental in leading CHA to disband Service Connector, which was widely viewed as ineffective. She also guided CHA's efforts to develop and implement FamilyWorks, revamp internal policies and procedures, adopt and implement a work requirement policy, move to performance-based contracting for service providers, expand the capacity of the data tracking and reporting system, and terminate underperforming contracts.

Integrate and align restricted and flexible funds to support innovative program models. The Initiative faced few obstacles meeting its funding goal. PNC organized a source of mostly private “pooled funds” from local foundations and the private sector that was considered “flexible money.” These flexible funds were used to promote innovative workforce development programs, as well as evaluation of those programs to inform continuous learning. In addition to pooling flexible funds, the Initiative was able to leverage and align additional resources from CHA and public agency partners in support of Initiative goals.

Pooled funding allowed investors to make a bigger impact than they could have individually. Investment amounts varied, but funders at all levels were able to take credit for the Initiative's success. Additionally, it allowed funders to support a coordinated set of strategies, where on their own they would have had the capacity to fund and monitor only individual



The Partnership for New Communities organized “flexible money,” which was used to promote innovative workforce development programs.

programs. The SAG provided input into how pooled funds were allocated, and PNC’s board, which included many Opportunity Chicago investors, reviewed and approved specific grants. Thus, while pooled, flexible funding may be ideal, “there need to be guarantees on how the fund will operate in terms of new monies and investments that aren’t earmarked.”

However, there are challenges to aligning public and private dollars and otherwise pooling resources. Those responsible for administering the funds must balance the interests of all stakeholders – public and private – and understand the constraints under which they operate. As several respondents noted, typically the public sector is more constrained in its use of resources, while the private sector and philanthropic organizations are able to be “more creative and innovative” in their funding approaches. Opportunity Chicago tried to arrive at a mid-point, recognizing everyone’s limitations. Stakeholders agreed this was a collective learning process in which Initiative partners did not always know what would work, but flexible dollars allowed for experimentation that would not have been possible absent a blending of funding.

Learn from mistakes and make corrections. Initiative partners have demonstrated an adaptability that has been integral to Opportunity Chicago’s progress. Its structure has been flexible to accommodate shifting resources, demands, and priorities over time. One of the Initiative’s strengths has been that the collective investment and engagement of partners allowed it to pilot programs. Partners have been willing to accept when pilot efforts were not working, to exit pilots that were failing, and to change direction for improved outcomes (e.g., dissolution of TWL as an industry focus and termination of the National Readiness Credentialing program). In addition, when CHA spearheaded a major reorganization of its case management and service delivery model from Service Connector to FamilyWorks and related improvements to CHA’s data collection system, Initiative partners embraced these changes as they were universally seen as significant improvements.

Workforce intermediaries, program providers, and case management providers alike view Opportunity Chicago as having had positive impacts on their individual programs and the way that they deliver services. Some providers credited Opportunity Chicago with having “spearheaded the connection between literacy and jobs” and strengthening their capacity by enabling them to better integrate once stand-alone service components (like literacy) into their overall programming.



Others spoke of the importance of PNC funding in the context of pilot programs. “We would never have gotten money from government sources to do a similar pilot.”

Similarly, changes initiated by CHA – including termination of Service Connector, adoption of a work requirement, improvements in data tracking and management, willingness to invest significant resources in services and training, and moving to outcomes-oriented contracting models – are seen as positive and significant contributors to the Initiative’s success. While the Initiative was organized to support CHA’s Plan for Transformation, it was CHA that directly funded and managed the case management and service delivery system and that was accountable for outcomes. Consequently, CHA’s willingness to make significant programmatic changes to improve the underlying infrastructure was essential.

Aligning Supply and Demand

Targeting a single population provides advantages and challenges. An advantage of targeting a single population was that it allowed for funding of, and experimentation with, innovative programs such as transitional jobs and contextualized literacy in a somewhat controlled environment of hard-to-serve individuals who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to benefit from such programs. Given the lack of evaluation research on services for public housing residents, stakeholders believed the Initiative would contribute important lessons to the field – lessons that ultimately could be transferred to the larger workforce development system and thereby enable disadvantaged city residents to benefit from system improvements.

However, employer engagement proved difficult. Stakeholders agreed that creating partnerships with employers was critical for ensuring that training programs met labor market demands and for identifying job placement opportunities. However, initial strategies focused exclusively on public housing residents. The industry specialists working on employer engagement believed that being identified as a CHA resident created a stigma among potential employers, diminishing residents’ employment prospects.

As the Initiative matured, providers eventually employed a “mainstreaming” approach so that residents would be viewed the same as the general service population. As the Initiative embraced a more defined industry sector strategy, it established partnerships with existing city workforce sector centers and with other providers focused on workforce training for targeted industries. These providers had strong relationships with employers in their respective sectors. With targeted Initiative funding, City-wide programs such as ManufacturingWorks and ServiceWorks provided a means for CHA residents to be integrated into a pool for employers. These partnerships better positioned the Initiative to realize greater scale, efficiency and sustainability.

Consider “hooks” and incentives to increase program participation. In January 2009, more than three years into the Initiative, CHA’s work requirement took effect. Part of its Moving to Work Agreement with HUD, the policy was adopted in December 2007 but not implemented until 2009 to allow time to develop and refine the implementation strategy. The policy mandated that all adults aged 18 to 61 living in traditional public housing developments be

employed, or engaged in activities leading to work, for at least 20 hours per week. The requirement provided a greater “incentive” for residents to engage in workforce development activities. For providers working to place CHA residents into employment, the work requirement served as a needed boost and improved their ability to engage residents. Many providers report that prior to the implementation of the policy, residents had few incentives to participate in employment and training services; after the policy was instituted, however, residents became more likely to seek out such programs.

The work requirement also provided an important framework to focus efforts on all jobseekers, not only those most motivated and eager to work.

Case management and wrap-around supports are essential program elements. Case management support was seen as an integral part of the Initiative’s offerings, and it had a significant impact on residents’ ability to succeed in the job market. On the front end, through comprehensive assessments, service interventions could be tailored to specific individual and family needs; case managers tracked resident progress over time and provided resources, coaching, and support to jobseekers. Good front-end assessments and services can reduce the overall cost of services, and ongoing and consistent follow-up on the back end, following program exit, can improve job retention.

The Initiative’s partners also learned that public housing residents had far more serious barriers to

work than case management could mitigate in the short-term. For example, 37 percent of residents who participated in Initiative programs were among CHA’s chronically unemployed population who faced significant employment barriers, including substance abuse, physical and mental health, and literacy challenges. The evaluation team examined this issue through interviews and focus groups with residents, employers and providers.

Service providers frequently cited little or no work experience, severe skill shortages and undiagnosed learning disabilities, substance abuse, and health challenges. Providers also reported an “age-skills mismatch,” after finding that younger clients (20s to mid-30s) achieved greater success in their programs than older clients (mid-30s to 50). Younger clients tended to exude more confidence, were technologically “savvy,” and typically had more education compared with older clients who often lacked the skills or education that employers were seeking.

Residents interviewed during focus groups spoke about a lack of marketable skills, few entry-level jobs with decent salaries, spatial disconnects between where job openings exist and where jobseekers live, and employer discrimination against public housing residents. Several thought that in some cases resident reluctance to engage in work activities was driven by a fear that employment and/or increased income might impact their rent or other public benefits they receive, and that that fear served to discourage succeeding in jobs programs.





Data Collection and Usage

Agree at the outset on how data will be collected, stored, and analyzed. Opportunity Chicago struggled with how and what types of data should be collected, stored, and analyzed. Over time, however, SAG members began to identify problems with the data being reported, and the evaluation activities brought data issues to light, leading to some improvements. These generated a better understanding about how to use data and allowed for the gathering and tracking of data through a single system. For example, when CHA implemented FamilyWorks, it began to incorporate workforce development outcomes in all vendor contracts.

Replicability

Opportunity Chicago did not try to create a new or parallel workforce system, but rather sought to better equip the existing system to support public housing residents. In considering the question of how to replicate this Initiative, issues to consider are:

Moving to Work (MTW) designation is essential, but is not available to all PHAs. Having a funding collaborative in place to support housing authority programs is a benefit, but a MTW designation is extremely helpful to a housing agency looking to duplicate the Initiative. Chicago “would not have been able to do the kinds of programming it did without MTW – the money would not have been available.” Many of the specific programs CHA invested in do not require MTW designation; it is the flexibility that MTW provides to combine certain public housing funds into a block grant and to prioritize funding for supportive services that is important.

An accessible, flexible stream of funding is important, regardless of the actual funding source. Private funds and flexible dollars were essential to propel the Initiative forward.

An ability to leverage and align resources is critical to maximize impact.

An accessible, flexible stream of funding is important, regardless of the actual funding source. Private funds and flexible dollars were essential to propel the Initiative forward. Certain 'experimental' programs may not have been prioritized absent this type of funding. Pooled funding offered advantages that allowed the Initiative to leverage additional funds and resources. It also allowed PNC to align and facilitate a range of investments (large and small) to support a shared, overarching goal that required significant resources and flexible funding to support emerging and innovative programs.

Recruit leadership with the ability to shift (sometimes ineffective) public funds.

The Initiative had champions at many levels and was universally thought of as "necessary in Chicago," given the Plan for Transformation goals. Mayor Richard M. Daley was a key supporter of the Plan and marshaled City resources to further this priority. Mayor Rahm Emanuel in early 2012 announced a recalibration of the Plan for Transformation to reimagine the Plan for the future.

Systems Change

As the Initiative concluded, there were important indicators of systems change. While the scale of these early changes is modest, they represent steps in a new direction. Over the longer term, the extent of the gains will depend on how local system actors incorporate the lessons from Opportunity Chicago into their long-term systems reform agenda. Key indicators of change to date include:

Greater collaboration across a range of partners who did not work together historically.

Key informants agreed that the Initiative has resulted in unprecedented levels of collaboration among city agencies, and this collaboration has resulted in greater access to City workforce services, including WIA and City Colleges, for CHA residents. And, for CHA as an institution, participation in Opportunity Chicago is seen as having advanced CHA's "connectedness" with other systems and system actors: the agency is "no longer isolated, and others look at CHA differently and have learned to trust the agency." There is consensus among Initiative partners that other successful collaborative efforts (such as Workforce Partnership for Energy Efficiency¹⁵ and City of Chicago Recovery Partnership¹⁶) were made possible by the demonstrated success of the Initiative through which PNC was able to convene an array of workforce actors and sustain their engagement over time.

Through its advocacy efforts aimed at improving the capacity of the local workforce development system to serve public housing residents and other low-income, low-skilled individuals, Opportunity Chicago pushed for inclusion of public housing residents as a target population in city workforce development programs. In 2010, DFSS included public housing residents, along with other underserved groups, as a target population in a request for proposals for a Community Development Block Grant-funded TJ program. Other specific examples of institutionalized alignment both across and within public agencies include:

1. DFSS added language to its requests for proposals (RFP) requiring responders to address ways they intend to work with public housing residents.
2. DFSS incorporated elements of TJ and Literacy programs into its provider contracts – not just for CHA residents but for other populations as well.
3. City Colleges of Chicago is engaged in strategic planning and implementation to reinvent itself, and key Initiative leaders/collaborative members are advising on CCC reinvention efforts.
4. Initiative leaders are advising on the reconfiguration of the City and Cook County's three workforce systems into one innovative agency – the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership.
5. CHA streamlined and standardized its case management and workforce reporting requirements across all contractors. Respondents describe FamilyWorks today as being better coordinated, with less service duplication, and more efficient overall.
6. Once competing and duplicative, an industry-specific strategy now is integrated into the workforce strategies of the city's sector-based (WIA-funded) one-stop workforce centers, ManufacturingWorks and ServiceWorks. The centers have become more responsive to the needs of CHA residents.

Opportunity Chicago pushed for inclusion of public housing residents as a target population in city workforce development programs.

Overall, the Initiative has helped elevate public housing residents as a priority population in the delivery of workforce development services.

There is greater attention to the unique needs of public housing residents. Overall, the Initiative has helped elevate public housing residents as a priority population in the delivery of workforce development services. For example, though the use of WIA funding is somewhat restrictive, DFSS and CHA have continued to discuss how to ensure that the local system is more accessible to low-skilled workers. The Initiative also attracted national attention when it was awarded a U.S. Department of Labor “Pathways Out of Poverty” grant. The program focuses on job opportunities for residents in “green” building maintenance and environmentally friendly pest management.

Greater alignment and collaboration within the workforce system. Most Initiative stakeholders agree that the creation of the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC) in 2008 was influenced in part by Opportunity Chicago lessons. The Initiative made recommendations to CWIC and used policy briefs to advocate for change throughout the broader workforce development system. A series of briefs documented lessons learned from Opportunity Chicago and outlined how those lessons can inform workforce development programs to assist low-skilled individuals in finding and retaining a job. Key policy briefs include:

- » [A Partnership for Change: How Opportunity Chicago Helped Create New Workforce Pathways for Public Housing Residents;](#)
- » [Making the Workforce System Work for Public Housing Residents: How Lessons from Opportunity Chicago Can Inform Rethinking the Workforce Investment Act of 1998;](#) and
- » [Sectors Matter: Effective Training Requires an Industry Focus.](#)

There also has been progress toward integrating and using workforce and related data systems. CWIC established CWICstats in an effort to use workforce data more effectively to make program-level and system-level decisions aiming to maximize the return on workforce investment. Housed at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, CWICstats pulls workforce data from existing databases and individual-level data from public systems (education, employment, etc.), and conducts analyses to help inform future policy and programming.

In addition, lessons learned from the Initiative’s Contextualized Literacy and TJ-Literacy programs influenced the need for stronger literacy workforce integration being promoted under CWIC’s Human Capital Strategy.

(As noted earlier, CWIC is now part of the reconfiguration of Chicago and Cook County’s workforce systems, a process involving several Opportunity Chicago leaders.)



Life After Opportunity Chicago



With the exception of a few ongoing PNC investments, Opportunity Chicago formally ended at the end of 2010, and PNC concluded in early 2012, as planned. However, while the Initiative and PNC have been brought to a close, important ongoing work remains for Initiative partners. This includes deepening the early systems alignment, continuing to advance a workforce agenda that prioritizes the needs of the hardest to employ, and building upon opportunities that were not fully – or could not be – maximized during the Initiative’s tenure. CHA will continue to invest in FamilyWorks and direct programs, and the recalibration of the Plan for Transformation provides an additional opportunity to reimagine programs and strategies to support families. Given the slow economic recovery, CHA residents will likely continue to compete with large numbers of jobseekers and incumbent workers. Thus, the need is even greater for the types of focused strategies and supports implemented by the Initiative.

Continue to push for systems integration.

At the writing of this report, key SAG members are integrally involved in reconfiguring Chicago and Cook County’s workforce systems. The new entity is anticipated to continue to advance a workforce development agenda that embraces the lessons from Opportunity Chicago and specifically integrate strategies for working with jobseekers who typically are considered hardest to serve, including public housing families. It will be essential that the new entity leverage local funding and advocate for policies that support jobseekers with barriers to employment. Career advancement for those residents already placed is an additional need. As reported earlier, 52 percent of residents remained employed for two or more years, a significant achievement for this

population and the Initiative. These workers will require ongoing supports to retain employment and advance in their careers. Ideally, this will be a key focus of local workforce leaders.

City Colleges of Chicago: Unfulfilled expectations, but “Reinvention” and reorganization present opportunities going forward.

City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) was at the Opportunity Chicago table primarily through the intergovernmental agreement funded by CHA. However, for several reasons its role as a strong workforce partner was seen as “unfulfilled,” and generally did not live up to other Initiative members’ and partners’ expectations. First, CCC had a history of not partnering or working well with community groups and community-based organizations, according to most stakeholders interviewed. Second, leadership at the top was lacking, which meant a limited commitment to the Initiative on the part of CCC administrators and the programs and services that mattered to Opportunity Chicago. Third, the CCC system as structured during the Initiative’s tenure was “disjointed and underutilized.” Program offerings were often viewed as out of sync with Opportunity Chicago strategies and residents’ interests; and generally, there was “not enough pull of residents through the system.” One example stakeholders cited was CCC’s tendency to enroll residents into non-credit or certificate programs that did not always match residents’ interests, as opposed to degree programs in which residents expressed more interest.

CCC currently is “reinventing” itself with the goal of remaking the institution and restructuring programs and services to ensure better educational and employment outcomes for all enrollees. Reinvention

also presents an opportunity to look at ways that CCC might position itself as a workforce leader to better serve and target programs to hard-to-serve population groups, including public housing residents. Opportunity Chicago institutional partners, including CJC and service providers, have a seat at this 'reinvention' table, adding a voice for intentional workforce systems alignment. Reinvention tactics include the following possible actions:

- Better position CCC as a “stepping stone” for attendance at four-year institutions, particularly for youth;
- Place more emphasis on Bridge and pre-Bridge programs and put more student supports in place;
- Develop or expand programs and courses that lead to better career trajectories and higher earnings potential; and

CCC Goals of Reinvention

The City Colleges of Chicago has four goals for its Reinvention:

- » Increase the number of students earning college credentials of economic value
- » Increase the rate of transfer to Bachelor's degree programs following CCC graduation
- » Drastically improve outcomes for students needing remediation
- » Increase number and share of ABE/GED/ESL students who advance to and succeed in college-level courses

Source: City Colleges of Chicago Web site

- Structure the data systems to flag vulnerable residents, track their outcomes and partner with providers to deliver wrap-around supports to improve resident success in programs.

Workforce Investment Act: Many residents are not suitable candidates for WIA-funded programs; given emphasis on meeting outcome targets, providers may be reluctant to work with the hardest-to-serve.

Most CHA residents who need services are not WIA-appropriate in terms of their barriers (learning deficiencies, mental health issues, etc.). WIA service providers therefore are reluctant to serve these individuals because they must meet their WIA target numbers. Some Initiative partners worry that absent the Initiative's singular focus on public housing residents, no system will validate and support a continued focus on residents' workforce needs. Finally, although DFSS generally is better aligned to serve public housing residents, political and leadership changes as a result of a new City administration have triggered uncertainty about whether improvements will be institutionalized. Federal funding cuts and questions about the future of WIA further exacerbate these problems.

Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance. Another legacy of Opportunity Chicago is the creation of the new Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance in the spring of 2012. Recognizing the benefits of collaboration and pooling and aligning funding to achieve broader impact, this new initiative was seeded by several of the same funders who participated in Opportunity Chicago. The Alliance will collaborate with employers and other



workforce stakeholders to create jobs, reduce unemployment, and increase earnings for underprepared workers in the Chicago region. Many of its strategic priorities – including its focus on industry sectors, policy and systems reform, and improvements to data collection, analysis and use – grew out of lessons learned from the Initiative. While it is too early to predict, the Alliance has the potential to ensure that the system change gains made through Opportunity Chicago are continued and expanded as the region’s public workforce systems reorganize.

National Workforce Resources for Chicago. Opportunity Chicago attracted national attention and resources for its programs. The National Fund for Workforce Solutions supported the Initiative’s sector-based training programs through both financial resources and opportunities for peer learning. Grants from Living Cities and the US Department of Labor (through Jobs for the Future) supported green jobs initiatives. These relationships have led to ongoing funding opportunities for the region. For example, Jobs for the Future invited Chicago to participate in its US Department of Labor Green Jobs Innovation Fund application, which resulted in a three-year, \$850,000 grant for green manufacturing job training in the south side of Chicago and south suburban Cook County. While not a specific target population, recruitment efforts include outreach to both Chicago and Cook County public housing residents. Resources go beyond funding, by providing opportunities to learn from national best practices and access technical assistance. As the Alliance ramps up, it will likely continue to develop and expand relationships with these and other national workforce initiatives.

Opportunity
Chicago attracted
national attention
and resources for
its programs.



Appendix A: Participation and Employment Outcomes by Program Type and Provider



This table provides data on program participation – job readiness training (JRT), Adult Basic Education (ABE) or literacy training, other skills training, and subsidized jobs – and employment outcomes of Opportunity Chicago participants. The table presents data both by program type and by provider within each program type for transitional jobs, contextualized literacy, and industry skills training programs. Provider-level data were not available or not applicable for CCC, FamilyWorks/Service Connector, and WIA program activity.

All numbers in this table reflect Salesforce data unless otherwise indicated. Salesforce data for program participation and placements between 2006 and 2010 were provided by CHA. IDES data on quarters worked by CHA residents between 2004 and quarters 1 and 2 of 2011 were also provided by CHA. Note that the table likely under-represents the number of participants who worked after exit for each TJ provider. This is because the IDES data does not allow for determining which provider is responsible for participant employment for those participants who enrolled in more than one TJ program operated by different TJ providers. While these 120 records are excluded from the provider-level employment counts, they are included in the overall count of TJ participants who worked after exit.

- » **Total Number of Participants¹: 6,743**
- » **Total Number of Participants who Worked after Program Exit²: 5,185** (de-duplicated count of Participants who worked in 1+ quarters following exit from an Opportunity Chicago program).
- » **24,391 CHA residents worked between 2006 and 2011Q2** (including those who may or may not have participated in Opportunity Chicago programs).

Appendix A. Participation and Employment Outcomes by Program Type and Provider

Provider	# Participants ³	# JRT Participants	# ABE/Literacy Training Participants	# Other Skills Training Participants	# Participants with Subsidized Placement	# Participants who Worked after Exit (IDES)	% Participants who Worked after Exit (IDES)	% Participants with Subsidized Placement that Worked after Exit (IDES)
Transitional Jobs								
Association House	81	NA	58	3	28	43	53%	64%
Career Advancement Network	51	51	NA	NA	11	25	49%	100%
Central States SER	118	118	111	117	95	39	33%	42%
Employment & Employer Services	230	224	101	10	158	120	52%	63%
Harborquest	247	241	NA	NA	205	202	82%	85%
Heartland	948	865	126	183	789	780	82%	83%
Heartland Enhanced Literacy	48	48	37	4	25	38	79%	88%
Jobs for Youth	50	50	NA	NA	NA	38	76%	NA
North Lawndale Employment Network	50	49	NA	NA	26	30	60%	85%
TEC Services Consulting	123	122	6	86	28	54	44%	61%
						120 ⁴		
Total # Participants	1,793	1614	422	397	1,260	1,359	76%	80%

continued >>

Appendix A. Participation and Employment Outcomes by Program Type and Provider

Provider	# Participants ³	# JRT Participants	# ABE/Literacy Training Participants	# Other Skills Training Participants	# Participants with Subsidized Placement	# Participants who Worked After Exit (IDES)	% Participants who Worked After Exit (IDES)	% Participants with Subsidized Placement that Worked After Exit (IDES)
Contextualized Literacy Providers								
Association House	32	NA	24	3	10	21	66%	90%
LEED Council	32	28	31	32	NA	14	44%	NA
Total # Participants	64	28	55	35	10	35	55%	90%
Industry Skills Providers								
Central States SER (Healthcare)	121	NA	111	87	1	86	71%	100%
EDSI/ServiceWorks (Restaurant, Hospitality & Retail)	41	38	NA	NA	14	27	66%	64%
Instituto del Progreso Latino/Manufacturing-Works (Manufacturing)	100	100	NA	8	NA	73	73%	NA
Manpower (Office Skills)	90	90	NA	82	1	65	72%	100%
Total # Participants	345	226	111	172	16	245	71%	69%

continued >>

Appendix A. Participation and Employment Outcomes by Program Type and Provider

Provider	# Participants	# Participants who Completed the Program	Completion Rate	# Participants who Worked after Exit (IDES)	% Participants who Worked after Exit (IDES)
City Colleges of Chicago ⁵					
Technical Training	1278	913	71%		
Technical Training - Bridge Programs ⁶	290	158	54%		
Remediation	154	68	44%		
Career Bridge	29	8	28%		
Total # Participants⁵	1,403	965	69%	989	70%
FamilyWorks/ Service Connector Case Management					
Total # Participants⁵	4,532			3720	82%
WIA					
Total # Participants⁵	493			377	76%

¹A participant includes 1) any resident who participated in programs funded by CHA or PNC between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2010, including TJ, Industry Skills, Contextualized Literacy; 2) any resident who enrolled in a CCC program (via the IGA); and 3) any resident who was placed in a job by a FamilyWorks/ServiceConnector agency (regardless of whether they accessed any other Initiative-funded programs or were assessed). This definition also includes any resident with a record of using WIA funding who did not go through one of the programs listed here. Note that the sum of the number of people served by each provider may not equal the total # participants served for each program because participants may have accessed services with multiple providers.

²Worked after exit means a participant worked at least one quarter in the quarter of exit or any proceeding quarters through 6/30/2011 and is based on IDES data on employment and earnings by quarter. The methodology for determining the number who worked is discussed in detail in Appendix B. Program exit is defined by the last end date a participant has for a given program. The end date could be for training or a subsidized placement. Note: The sum of participants who worked after exit across program types does not sum to the total number of participants who worked after exit because some participants engaged in more than one program type.

³Participation is defined by enrollment in Job Readiness Training (JRT), ABE/Literacy, or Other Skills training. Given the uniqueness of the TJ program, participation includes all the previously mentioned trainings, and/or a Subsidized Job Placement.

⁴Instances where a participant enrolled in multiple TJ programs and the placement could not be attributable to a particular program.

⁵236 City Colleges of Chicago participants (10%) did not have a SSN and could not be matched to IDES data. In addition, participants exclude approximately 1,000 CCC students who participated in orientation but did not enroll in additional coursework or training.

⁶Bridge Programs are a subset of technical training programs at City Colleges of Chicago; the two categories are not mutually exclusive.

Appendix B: Methodology



In December 2006, The Partnership for New Communities contracted with the Center for Urban Economic Development (CUED) at the University of Illinois at Chicago and its partner Abt Associates (Abt) to conduct a hybrid formative and summative evaluation to assess the process, progress, effectiveness and impact of the Initiative. The evaluation covers the time period between January 2006 and December 2010 and was expected to inform and support continuous improvement of the Initiative while also tracking the Initiative's impact on public housing residents, employers, and public housing and workforce development systems in Chicago.

Given the Initiative's structure, the evaluation was designed to simultaneously address Initiative development and management, as well as implementation activities. Specifically, the evaluation tracked five areas: development and management of the Initiative, source and use of Initiative resources, impact on the integration of public housing and workforce development systems, employer engagement, and improvement of employment outcomes for CHA residents.

Methodological Approach

The evaluation used a "multiple methods" approach, triangulating information collected from multiple parties, including the Initiative's partners and associated providers, CHA residents, and employers. Each of these groups had its own assessment of the issues being addressed by the Initiative, the Initiative's desired outcomes and the extent to which it achieved its goals. Together, these perspectives provide a fuller, more balanced representation of the Initiative overall.

In assessing each area of the Initiative, the evaluation used data from a variety of sources and a range of methods:

Objectives of the Opportunity Chicago Evaluation

- » Support the development, refinement, and assessment of Initiative performance benchmarks
- » Support continuous improvements, including increasing the capacity to attract additional resources and expanding the level of resources focused on specific areas of need
- » Document the strategies and processes used to expand the capacity of cross-sector systems to prepare public housing residents for employment success
- » Identify emerging lessons and key issues as the Initiative unfolds
- » Help to articulate and document a model for local and national public workforce systems that more effectively addresses the challenges of low-skilled, low-income jobseekers

1. **CHA data:** The 13 organizations that received Initiative funding were required to input data on program activities and participant outcomes into CHA's Salesforce information management system. In the early years of the Initiative, providers tracked data separately and CHA staff later back-entered the data into Salesforce. The evaluation team aggregated and analyzed data across those 13 organizations to determine the overall population, but also looked at participation separately by program type and provider. Demographic data was obtained from CHA's Yardi (a software program for public housing authorities), FamilyWorks assessment, and Salesforce population files. Throughout the Initiative data quality has improved, and missing rates for key variables have decreased.

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2. **Illinois Department Employment Security (IDES) data:** IDES, the agency that administers the state's Unemployment Insurance, Employment Services, and Labor Market Information programs, provided employment and earnings data to CHA for quarters 2004 through 2011Q2. CHA matched the data to its resident population and passed the resident-matched file to the evaluation team on April 29, 2011, and an additional two quarters of data on January 25, 2012. Key variables of interest included year and quarter of employment, industry sector, and income. The evaluation team used the IDES data to analyze residents' employment histories and earnings two years before they entered an Initiative program and after they exited the program. The evaluators also used the data to conduct an industry analysis to determine in which sectors Opportunity Chicago participants worked.
 3. **City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) data:** The evaluation team used data from CCC to develop its participant population. CCC data include records of all CHA resident enrollments between 2006 and 2010 at any CCC campus. The data reports on activities in the CCC Career Bridge, Remediation, and Technical Training (including Bridge programs).
 4. **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) data:** The evaluation team used data from the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) to develop its participant population. WIA data includes all training and placement activity from 2006 through the 1st quarter of 2010 for which residents utilized WIA funds.

In addition to quantitative data, the evaluation team collected qualitative data from a variety of sources between September 2007 and June 2011. These data came from the following sources:

1. **Site Visits and Interviews with Program Administrators and Staff:** During spring 2010 and spring 2011, the evaluation team conducted site visits and/or phone interviews with seven of the nine TJ provider organizations, three industry skills providers, and two contextualized literacy providers. Site visits and interviews were designed to gather information about providers' overall program operations, and to better understand implementation challenges and successes.
2. **Key Informant Interviews:** The evaluation team conducted yearly interviews with program funders, public agency partners, and other Opportunity Chicago stakeholders and key informants to gain their perspectives on the Initiative relative to its goals, strategies, and effectiveness, as well as potential policy implications.
3. **Employer Interviews:** Two sets of employer interviews informed the analysis of employer engagement with Opportunity Chicago, for a total of 14 employers interviewed. In May 2010, the evaluation team conducted telephone interviews with eight employers, all with experience hiring both subsidized and unsubsidized jobseekers through the TJ program. In addition to the 2010 employer interviews, the evaluators relied upon existing employer data collected through employer interviews conducted by the evaluation team in the fall of 2007. The 2007 interviews included six employers that had hired program participants for subsidized

transitional jobs only. These interviews were conducted at the employers' places of business. For both sets of interviews, the evaluation team used semi-structured discussion guides to inquire about a range of topics, including employers' motivations for participating in the program, recruitment and hiring issues, the role of the subsidy, perceptions about the quality of jobseekers recruited through the program, and the challenges and benefits associated with participation in the program. Each employer participated in one interview only.

4. Resident Focus Groups: The evaluation team conducted three focus groups with CHA residents in fall 2007. CHA residents were randomly selected from a Salesforce database list of 1,812 residents who were either placed with an employer or referred to a training program since January 2006, and for whom there was complete telephone contact information available. Forty residents participated in the focus groups.

Respondents were asked about a range of topics, including the job assistance programs they participated in, how they heard about or requested service, expectations for the job assistance programs, what worked well/what did not, the challenges they have faced in finding and retaining employment, and recommendations for improving the service delivery system.

5. Industry Specialists: In fall 2007, the evaluation team conducted interviews with three industry specialists who were employed through the Initiative (in the hospitality, transportation/warehousing/logistics, and health care industries). Industry specialist interviews were conducted using semi-structured discussion guides. Respondents were asked about their role in the Initiative, the employer engagement strategy, and suggestions for improving the Initiative.

6. Review of Program Documents: The evaluation team reviewed relevant program documents (background documents, program contracts, progress reports, etc.) provided by PNC, CJC, and CHA, as well

as literature and published studies on workforce development programs.

Methodology for Identifying Participants Who Worked After Program Exit

In past reports, the focus of the employment outcomes analysis has been on assessing the number of residents who started a job through Opportunity Chicago. This report uses additional data sources to assess the number of residents who worked after they exited Opportunity Chicago programs. The evaluation team used Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and Salesforce data to report on key employment outcomes of participants who engaged in programs and services funded by the Initiative. The methodology that the Opportunity Chicago evaluation team used to construct these analyses is described below.

1. Development of the Initiative Population

The evaluation team used the Salesforce data provided by CHA in April 2011 to develop a data set that included the population of "Participants." An Initiative Participant is defined as a CHA resident who did at least one of the following:

- Participated in programs funded by CHA or PNC, including Transitional Jobs, Industry Skills, or Contextualized Literacy. Participation is defined by enrollment in job readiness, ABE/literacy, or other skills training and/or placement in a subsidized job.
- Enrolled in a City Colleges of Chicago program (via the Intergovernmental Agreement between City Colleges and the Chicago Housing Authority).
- Was placed in a job by a FamilyWorks/Service Connector agency, regardless of whether he or she accessed any other Initiative-funded programs or was assessed by a FamilyWorks or Service Connector case manager.
- Used WIA funding for training or placement.



To supplement these data, the evaluation team used data received from CHA in prior years for activities that occurred with the Transitional Jobs program and FamilyWorks/Service Connector case management activities between 2006 and 2009. Certain records were added, adjusted, or excluded according to CHA's and PNC's instructions during summer 2011.

In addition, the evaluation team excluded from the OC Population the following records:

- 236 records from the City Colleges data that did not have a SSN and therefore were unmatchable to the IDES data.
- Program records that either had no dates of participation (i.e., orientation, training, placement), or had dates indicating participation in orientation but not additional activities (unless otherwise instructed by CHA and PNC). These records did not fit the definition of a participant (see above definition of participant).
- For participants who engaged in industry skills, TJ, or contextualized literacy programs, records that included an unsubsidized placement but no other programmatic engagement in training or a subsidized placement.
- Records with illogical SSNs that would not appropriately match the IDES data (e.g., 123456789, 999999999).

2. Work After Program Exit

Employment following program exit is one of the key outcomes the evaluation team examined. To get a count of the number of participants that worked after exit, the evaluators merged the Opportunity Chicago Population file, described above, with IDES data on quarterly employment records of CHA residents between 2006 and 2011Q2. To look at employment outcomes post-program exit, the evaluators determined the last exit date a participant had for a given program type. For example, if a participant enrolled in a TJ program and completed orientation on 12/31/09, completed JRT training on 2/1/10, and ended a subsidized placement on 5/1/10, the quarter of exit was coded as 2010Q2. They then analyzed the IDES data to look at whether and in how many quarters a participant worked starting in the quarter of exit, through the last quarter for which data were available 2011Q2. If someone worked in at least one quarter during that time frame, the evaluators counted them as having worked after program exit. They found that in most cases the first quarter worked was the same quarter of exit, but the first quarter worked could have been any quarter between program exit and the end of June 2011. A key limitation of the IDES data is that it only determines whether a person worked in a quarter, not the exact start and end date of that employment record. Therefore, IDES data does not serve as a good measure of job retention, and Salesforce data was used in its place.

Appendix C: Terms and Measures



The Evaluation Report utilizes key terms that are defined below:

Employment Change Measures. Both pre-program and post-program measures were recorded for those participants who had completed a program. For purposes of analyzing the IDES data and examining participants' employment and earnings patterns before program entry and after program completion, the evaluation team created four employment categories representing a spectrum of the percentage of quarters residents worked. The four employment status categories used in this report are defined below:

- **Consistently Unemployed** are those who worked zero quarters before and/or after participating in a program.
- **Sporadically Employed** are those who worked between 1 and 49 percent of all possible quarters before and/or after participating in a program.
- **Mostly Employed** are those who worked between 50 and 99 percent of all possible quarters before and/or after participating in a program.
- **Consistently Employed** are those who worked all possible quarters before and/or after participating in a program.

Enrollees are individuals who had an orientation start date or any program activity between 2006 and 2010.

Participants include: 1) any resident who participated in programs funded by CHA or PNC, including TJ, Industry Skills, Contextualized Literacy; 2) any resident who enrolled in a CCC program (via the IGA), and 3) any resident who was placed in a job by a FamilyWorks/Service Connector agency (regardless of whether they accessed any other Opportunity Chicago-funded programs or were assessed). This definition also includes any resident with a record of using WIA funding. Individuals may have participated in more than one program, either in the same program multiple times and/or in different programs.

Participants who Worked after Exit includes a de-duplicated count of Participants who worked in at least one quarter following exit from a program. This could include the quarter of exit or any subsequent quarter through 6/30/2011.



Percent Change in Quarterly Earnings examines the extent of before- versus after-program change in quarterly earnings. Note: earnings figures do not account for inflation or changes in the minimum wage.

Percent Change in Quarters Worked measures the extent of before- versus after-program change in the percent of quarters worked.

Placements are those with a subsidized or unsubsidized job placement, as recorded in the Salesforce database. Subsidized placements are temporary job placements for which the program covers all or a portion of participants' wages, benefits, supervision and training. Unsubsidized placements are jobs secured by participants (with or without program assistance) after exiting an Opportunity Chicago program. For the purposes of this report, subsidized placements are discussed in the context of program participation and unsubsidized placements are only discussed in the context of job retention. Any discussion of unsubsidized employment after exit uses IDES data.

Post-program Exit refers to the period between program exit and Q2 of 2011, the cutoff point for the IDES data received for this analysis.

Pre-program Entry refers to the period eight quarters prior to program entry.

Program Exit is defined by the last end date a participant has for a given program. The end date could be for training or a subsidized placement.

TJ Participants are those individuals who participated in one or more of the following program segments beyond orientation in a Transitional Jobs program: Job Readiness Training (JRT), Other Skills Training, and ABE/Literacy training, and/or had a subsidized placement. This measure is intended to capture the TJ population with more significant engagement with the program (i.e., attended and engaged in activities beyond orientation). In a small number of instances, individuals participated in more than one program, either in the same program multiple times and/or in different programs.

Endnotes



- 1 In accordance with CHA's FY2011 Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP), every applicant, resident and adult authorized family member of a public housing unit, age 18 up to age 54, is required to be engaged, 20 hours a week, on a regular basis, unless the resident or adult authorized family member of the household is exempt or approved for Safe Harbor. Any member of the applicant or resident's household, who is 17 years of age and not attending school full-time, will be subject to the CHA Work Requirement. Applicants from the public housing wait lists are not eligible for Safe Harbor. Applicants, residents, and adult authorized family members of the household may meet the work requirement through any combination of employment, attendance at an accredited school, educational institution, training program, job readiness, GED or literacy program, internship, or work experience opportunity. The original work requirement instituted in 2009 was 15 hours a week. Source: CHA.
- 2 A demonstration program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Moving to Work provides public housing authorities the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally-designed strategies that use Federal dollars more efficiently, help residents find employment and become self-sufficient; and increase housing choices for low-income families. Source: HUD.
- 3 FamilyWorks Program Guide, 2011.
- 4 The work requirement was approved by the CHA Board of Commissioners in December 2007 but implemented in 2009.
- 5 This count excludes 236 records in the CCC data that did not have a SSN.
- 6 The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is a national workforce development effort dedicated to preparing job seekers for careers nationwide.
- 7 Demographic percentages are based on CHA Demographic data from 2006-2010 resident files; participant income figures are based on CHA 2010 YARDI income data.
- 8 National Fund For Workforce Solutions.
- 9 Unemployment rates and information cited are based on publicly available labor market data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (IDES LAUS). Website: <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/laus> (accessed April through August 2011). The 4.2 percent figure is for the month of September 2006. From this point forward and unless specified otherwise, unemployment figures cited represent annual averages recorded by IDES. Unless specified, references are to the Chicago Metropolitan Area, which includes Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, McHenry and Will counties.
- 10 Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Data and Illinois Department of Employment Security Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
- 11 For all programs except FamilyWorks or Service Connector placement assistance, exit represents the last exit date a participant had from any part of the program. For FamilyWorks/Service Connector the exit date represents the same quarter that a participant's job placement started – i.e., the point at which the placement assistance stopped.

- 12 In defining the four employment categories used in this report, possible quarters includes the eight quarters leading up to and including the quarter of program entry, or the quarters following program exit, starting with the quarter of exit. While the possible number of quarters worked pre-program entry is always eight, the possible number of quarters post-program exit could be between 1 and 22.
- 13 Twenty-nine percent became mostly employed after program exit and the remaining 13 percent were sporadically employed (12 percent) or consistently unemployed (1 percent) after program exit.
- 14 Per the U.S. Department of Housing and Human Services, the 2010 poverty guideline was \$14,570. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/10poverty.shtml>. Accessed 11/14/11.
- 15 Workforce Partnership for Energy Efficiency (WPEE) collaboration through Living Cities grant to create job opportunities for CHA residents and other disadvantaged populations in the local “green” economy.
- 16 City of Chicago Recovery Partnership – Jobs Taskforce: collaboration around planning and implementation of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus funds.

Opportunity Chicago was generously funded by:

Bank of America

The Chicago Community Trust

Chicago Department of Family and Support Services

Chicago Housing Authority

ComEd, an Exelon Company

Harris Bank

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Jobs for the Future

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The Joyce Foundation

Living Cities

The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation

McCormick Foundation

National Fund for Workforce Solutions

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State of Illinois

State Street Foundation-State Street Global Advisors

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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