

B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Increasing employment and raising incomes of residents in the workforce are top priorities for the City of Rochester. Unemployment and underemployment have negative impacts to individuals as well as an entire community. Conversely, high-quality jobs lead to financial stability, high educational attainment, low crime, and increased health and well-being of residents. This Section outlines strategies for increasing the number of and access to quality lasting jobs in the community. Rochester's workforce must be ready to innovate, create, and participate in a competitive economy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Increasing employment and raising incomes of residents are top priorities for Rochester.
- The skills and readiness of the city's workforce must match the kinds of jobs available.
- Successful training programs exist in the community today, but often struggle to connect to potential participants.
- Local workforce development partners must work together and stay current to best respond to a competitive and constantly evolving job market.
- Workforce development efforts should constantly strive to be inclusive and responsive to underserved populations.
- Rochester's immigrant and refugee populations contribute to a diverse, entrepreneurial workforce.

WORKFORCE AS A TOOL FOR BUSINESS ATTRACTION + RETENTION

The quality of Rochester's workforce is fundamental to attracting economic development, sustaining existing businesses, and achieving individual and regional prosperity. Over the past several decades, the rise of technology and automation has fundamentally changed the way in which work is conducted.

Historically, Rochester was a hub of manufacturing and production; it was not only possible, but common for a person with a high school education to secure a well-paying job that would adequately provide for a family. However, economic forces on the national and regional level, the decline of unions, and other factors have combined to create an economy in which well-paying employment requires skills and knowledge more substantial than a basic high school education can provide.

As Rochester's economy, and that of the region as a whole, becomes more focused on technology, particularly optics, photonics, and imaging, the City of Rochester and its partner organizations have a crucial role to play in building a competent workforce that can meet increased labor demand. As we build a competent and well-positioned workforce, it is imperative that we promote competency for business attraction and foster connections between workforce and employers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

"Support job training programs that have effective linkages with employers."



B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The following are workforce development efforts that are having a positive impact on our community. A more comprehensive list of programs and resources can be found [here](#).

FINGER LAKES REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (FLREDC)

The FLREDC is the State-managed Economic Development Council for the Rochester region. It provides financial, technical, and strategic support to a number of local workforce development programs. The FLREDC also helps local programs by providing essential data and creating connections that can help secure external funding for initiatives.

MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (MCC)

MCC is an important local leader, partner, and resource for economic and workforce development. MCC was ranked by Washington Monthly as one of the 12 most “innovative colleges for adult learners” in 2017 because it is “on the cutting edge of making college more responsive to changes in the labor market.” And the college is nationally known for its data-driven approach to monitoring changes in the regional economy, measuring regional skills gaps, working with firms to develop new training programs to fill those gaps, and measuring the economic impact of its academic programs and certificates.

MCC’s Economic and Workforce Development Center maintains a database of over 2,400 local businesses that it engages to better understand the types of positions that open and skills that are needed, publishes research on local economic development needs and opportunities, and provides real time information about the regional labor market for four workforce clusters – advanced manufacturing, applied technologies, health care,



and information and computer technology. MCC is active on the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council and MCC leadership and staff partner with multiple local institutions on a broad range of initiatives to better train and connect local residents with good jobs.

SUNY BROCKPORT / ROCHESTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER (REOC)

SUNY Brockport manages the REOC in Downtown Rochester. This center focuses on developing skills for college students and pre-college students. REOC targets populations who are at a disadvantage when applying for school or jobs. The program offers close guidance to students as they navigate a traditional college program, a trade or certificate program, or learn skills that help apply for school, work in a job, or set personal goals. Tuition-free classes are also available to students in order to help transition students into an academic setting.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES CONTINUED

OPERATION TRANSFORMATION ROCHESTER (OTR)

OTR is an employment readiness training program that assists program participants with the development of job and life skills through employment training, educational opportunities, and mentorship. OTR connects job seekers to area employers, specialized training programs, and sustainable employability. Participants can utilize resume building, job search assistance, and community resource referral services to enhance their employability and access new employment opportunities.

In order for participants to succeed in workforce development training, it is often necessary to first focus on basic workforce readiness skills, such as ones taught through OTR. Program participants in OTR will be connected to additional skills training upon graduation, rather than focusing primarily on job placement. This will ensure that participants are equipped with the necessary skills to secure well-paying employment.

YOUNG ADULTS MANUFACTURER TRAINING EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (YAMTEP)

Designed for individuals older than 19 that have already completed the OTR program, YAMTEP is a not-for-profit organization that trains young adults and provides skills for jobs in manufacturing, health services, and food services. This 90-day program helps individuals to bridge skill gaps for entry level employment, and help integrate them into stable employment. YAMTEP collaborates with a number of stakeholders including the City of Rochester and Rochester Works, as well as with over 30 employers that perform interviews with students who complete the program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

“Can we document, coordinate and then communicate all of the various job training programs? Can we ask businesses what skills they need and then focus the training on those skills?”

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

In 2015, Albuquerque launched the "There's a Better Way" program, which provides panhandlers and those experiencing employment instability with a paid opportunity to serve their community. The program pays individuals an hourly wage to work on litter cleanup teams throughout the city. The program has been a model for cities across the country, including Syracuse.

Programs like this target residents who face a housing and employment crisis a stepping stone to long-term opportunities. Providing low-skill, short term jobs can provide confidence, work experience, and access to services, which can all lead to stable employment in the future. These programs help connect participants to resources such as long-term employment programs, housing services, and mental health and substance abuse services. Offering panhandlers, the homeless, and other residents a paying job can be a catalyst for long term stability and dignity.

B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES CONTINUED

URBAN FELLOWS

The City of Rochester's Urban Fellows Program provides talented graduate and undergraduate students an introduction to the governance, operations, and administration of City government. Through a combination of work experience, seminars, trainings, volunteer service, and tours, students are provided a unique opportunity to learn about City government, and develop skills that can help them to achieve employment in similar environments.

ROCHESTERWORKS!

The Federal Government requires states to designate Local Workforce Development Boards. In Rochester, the board has been delegated to RochesterWorks!. The Board acts as a one-stop career center where residents can get connected with the resources they need. Residents are directed to career services including job search and placement assistance, individual and group counseling and career planning, internships, youth services, and English language classes. Residents can also find training services includes job skills training and general adult education classes. RochesterWorks! provides a unique set of customized services to businesses and job seekers at little-to-no cost, preparing a skilled workforce and connecting them with opportunities in our region.

REJOBS

The Rochester Environmental Job Training Program, or ReJobs, is a federally funded program for underemployed and unemployed city residents. This eight-week program is a comprehensive, multi-partner effort designed to lead to sustainable, long-term employment. It is intended to improve the opportunities for city residents to share in the economic benefits derived from environmental cleanup projects.

Successful applicants to the ReJob program are provided life skills and remedial education training to foster self-sufficiency, in addition to training certifications needed for jobs in the asbestos abatement, hazardous waste site cleanup and general construction fields. High achieving graduating students may also be offered additional training in related fields including lead and mold abatement.



PUBLIC COMMENT

“More job training for city residents, especially in skill sets for jobs for which there is a demand. Partner with county and local schools and colleges.”

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES CONTINUED

ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (RCSD)

The RCSD's primary goal is to educate students and provide them with the skills they need to enter the workforce or continue their education. For more information on K-12 education, see [Schools and Community Centers, Section 3E](#).

The school district's Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES) is a training and education center that encourages adults to return to school in order to build workforce skills that can help them get a job. OACES offers the following:

- Classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages, helping non-English speakers learn the basic skills they need in the workforce.
- Career Pathway classes to train people in trades such as building maintenance, culinary, electrical, and customer services.
- Apprentice Related Supplemental Instruction Program where apprentices in different trades are registered and closely monitored for their participation in new jobs in order to ensure success.
- Early College International High School, in partnership with Monroe Community College, which offers an Early College Program. Students are put on an accelerated track through school and have the option to take college classes at no cost. This gives students more incentive to graduate, as they will have a head start when beginning their college or working career.

ROCHESTER-MONROE ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVE

RMAPI is a community-informed strategy to coordinate and align resources, policies and practices in an effort to reduce poverty in Rochester. The initiative, in collaboration with multiple community partners, focuses on building up the community in order to combat poverty.

RMAPI has acknowledged the important role that workforce development plays in fighting poverty, by collaborating on several workforce initiatives. This includes the Strengthening Working Families Initiative, which helps parents develop skills to succeed in the workforce and support their family, and the Rochester Health Profession Opportunity Grant, which helps underprivileged individuals learn skills and train for certifications in the healthcare field.



B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

CHALLENGES

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Feedback from workforce-focused community partners indicates that connecting to target populations is a major challenge for many organizations. Highly successful training programs exist in the community today. However, program directors often struggle to find enough participants to fill cohorts.

In many cases there is a serious disconnect between these organizations and the populations they strive to serve. This gap is often filled by predatory for-profit services and training programs that do not place the interest of the resident first. As stated by a workforce development partner, “it is very difficult to out-market these types of organizations. They have more resources to target advertisements and outreach than we do in most cases.”

ACCESS

Poverty and skill levels often limit the ability of some city residents to take advantage of workforce development programs. In many cases, participants cannot afford to take several weeks to attend training, which often represents a significant time commitment. It is critical for these programs to provide additional services, such as childcare, transportation, and stipends to program participants. This will help to ensure they have the best chance possible to complete training and secure employment.

An excellent model of this can be found in the new MCC Downtown Campus. The College has created a hub for students at which they can learn about services available to them. In addition, MCC provides free bus passes to all students and workforce development program participants.



STAYING CURRENT

The Rochester economy has shifted in recent years. The technology sector is growing, and emerging trends in the regional labor market point to growth in industries such as web development, high-tech manufacturing, and other sectors which require a distinct skillset. Workforce development systems and programs must constantly evolve to meet the needs of the new economy and not focus efforts on the industries that provided our employment base in the past.

STRUCTURAL RACISM

Decades of structural racism caused people of color in the Rochester community to be denied equal opportunity to gain skills and advance. Today, this is reflected in disparities in educational attainment, employment, and wages. According to the FLREDC, the unemployment rate for those without a high school diploma is 23%, more than five times higher than that of college graduates. Digging deeper, those without a high school diploma tend to be poorer and are overwhelmingly African American and Hispanic.

Under the current system, there is a failure to provide opportunity to those in our community who have historically been hindered from full participation in the economy. It is imperative that any discussions of workforce development are viewed through the lens of racial equity.

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Rochester has a long history of welcoming people from outside the continental U.S. into the City. According to 2016 ACS estimates, more than 18,000, or almost 9% of all Rochester residents were foreign-born. In 2017 and 2018 Rochester saw an influx of approximately 3,400 climate refugees from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

The immigrant and refugee population in Rochester is an asset to the local workforce and economy. Often, people coming to Rochester from other countries left behind skilled trades, professional positions, or businesses of their own. In fact, immigrants are often quite entrepreneurial— with some studies suggesting that they start new businesses at a rate of 17 times more than native-born Americans. It is important to work together to overcome barriers and provide better access to jobs, job training, small business support, or other economic opportunities for immigrants and refugees to support themselves and their families in their new life in Rochester.



PUBLIC COMMENT

“Many remain unemployed due to lack of resources. Job training is key. It gives hope and opens up new horizons.”

THE CITY AS A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LEADER

The City has strong relationships with many large employers in the region and can assist programs in bridging the gap between training and employment. The City, along with community partners, must bolster coordination of service offerings, publicize them when appropriate, and provide connection between residents and workforce development programs. For example, the City has a state of the art rental inspection program which places inspectors in the homes of residents, primarily in low-moderate income areas of the city. Inspectors could be partners in disseminating information about workforce programs to tenants who may be suffering due to joblessness.

In addition to the ability to publicize existing programs, the City of Rochester has access to an extensive network of “touch points” in the community in the form of its libraries, recreation centers, and Neighborhood Service Centers. These City facilities are widely used in the community, and are geographically spread across all neighborhoods. Often, they are already a trusted source of news and information. Librarians provide guidance on topics ranging from job interview and resume preparation to digital literacy. These community facilities can be used as recruitment hubs for high-performing workforce development programs.