

Generation Work National Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio

July 26-28, 2017

The Annie E Casey Foundation hosted its fourth national Generation Work meeting in Cleveland, OH. The Seattle team consisted of SkillUp Washington, Port Jobs, South Seattle College Georgetown campus and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. In addition to the Seattle team, local partnerships from Cleveland, Hartford, Indianapolis and Philadelphia attended. National Generation Work partners attending the meeting included MDRC, Aspen Institute, Child Trends, National Skills Coalition and the Race Matters Institute. Meeting agenda topics included:

- ✓ *Explore capacity-building learning community framework and share lessons and challenges in using it as a strategy for change;*
- ✓ *Share and discuss best practices around employer engagement, including experiences engaging issues related to hiring, supervising, retaining and promoting young workers;*
- ✓ *Discuss federal workforce policy environment and tactics for and experience engaging in coalition building, advocacy and other strategies for changing state policy;*
- ✓ *Engage in a facilitated peer-exchange on each local partnership's strategies and application of tools to address racial equity;*
- ✓ *Review Generation Work evaluation design and provide feedback to MDRC on the approach;*
- ✓ *Learn about the Cleveland partners Generation Work approach with local partners, employers and young people*

Materials from the Cleveland meeting will be available on the Generation Work SharePoint site. Annie E Casey Foundation staff approve access to the site; if you do not have access to the site and would like to do so please contact Chris Pierson at SkillUp regarding next steps.

Learning Communities

Participants were broken out into groups of similar roles (funders, educators, case workers/navigators, public agencies, etc.) to discuss the roles of learning communities in their respective communities for advancing a systems-change agenda. Summaries of learning community strategies from each community were also distributed (please see attached).

Each group was asked to brainstorm the top 5-7 most important strategies for successful learning communities and the larger group worked to arrange each of these strategies according to broader themes, such as having a clear vision and goals, relevant topics and strong facilitation. Sheila Maguire from the Aspen Institute will continue to refine the ideas discussed in the larger group and will share the framework with Generation Work partners in the coming weeks, including follow-up discussions in future Learning Community Network meetings, which occur bi-monthly.

Employer Engagement

Over the past six months the Aspen Institute have interviewed key Generation Work staff and identified ten existing, planned, and/or potential employer engagement strategies being pursued across the five sites, including: (1) Finding new/expand existing work with employers; (2) Interview/survey employers on hiring, retention and/or training needs; (3) Identify/develop "champions" who will hire more and talk about services they receive; (4) Improve experiences for participants and reduce turnover; (5) Identify employers offering career ladder opportunities; (6) Expand earn and learn activities; (7) Improve employment experiences for participants including supervisor trainings, mentoring/advising (from both employers and programs), and earn-and-learn toolkits for employers; (8) Offer special hiring events for young adults (similar to 100K); (9) Levering Corporate Social Responsibility asks; and (10) Shifting narrative/conversation with employers from CSR to business case for using services/engaging with programs.

Local sites were then asked to identify three strategies that they wanted to discuss and identify specific next steps to advance this strategy in the coming months. The Seattle team discussed identifying/developing employer champions, expanding work with employers, and expanding earn-and-learn activities:

- **Employer champions:** Building off the Airport Employer Survey and the Alaska Airlines Scholarship report, Port Jobs is planning an event in October to celebrate Alaska Airlines as an employer champion. The team discussed the need to invite other airport employers, public agencies and philanthropic partners to highlight Alaska Airlines' contributions to the career pathways supported through Airport University and identify other potential resources to expand the Airport University scholarship fund.
- **Expanding work with employers:** The Seattle team briefly discussed the National Fund RFP that was submitted by SkillUp in July to support the development of a retail industry partnership at Southcenter Mall, similar to the Airport Jobs Center and Airport University programs at SeaTac Airport. Port Jobs will be leading this work in partnership with Educurious, and will look for ways to embed high school completion services for workers at the mall without a high school diploma. SkillUp found out on August 4th that the RFP was accepted, and will follow up with local partners at the next Opportunity Youth Advisory Group regarding next steps.
- **Expand earn-and-learn activities:** Seattle partners identified the emerging state-wide conversations about expanding work-based learning opportunities for high school students, and that Generation Work should be more strongly represented at the table to ensure that the group (which includes the Governor's Office, SBCTC, OSPI, WTECB, Employment Security, Microsoft, and others) is including older young adults who are in need of their high school diploma and not just traditional high school students. We also talked about AJAC's emerging work around youth apprenticeship and the need to cross-walk their curriculum with the Common Core/High School 21+. This would expand earn-and-learn opportunities for older young adults in manufacturing/aerospace and would also expand Generation Work high school completion strategies in this sector as well.

Federal Policy Update & Coalition Building

The National Skills Coalition provided an overview of the federal workforce policy environment, including the budget, executive orders and possible legislation. Pat Steele from [Central Iowa Works](#) shared lessons learned from the [Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition](#), a statewide coalition that advocates for public investments in workforce training.

Racial Equity

Sites shared current strategies and activities undertaken with respect to racial equity since our last meeting in February. All sites discussed partnership workshops/trainings/discussions about the racial equity dynamics at play within their own systems and partnerships, and many talked about how they were pursuing the use of Race Matters' Backmapping tool with policymakers and/or funders to apply a structural equity lens to their work. Seattle partners shared the Puget Sound ESD's facilitated meetings with Generation Work partners, disaggregated data being collected at the program and regional levels for young adults' access to job and training opportunities, King County and CCER emerging strategies to engage Hispanic/Latino youth and findings from a BGCC briefing paper on young adult feelings about anticipated racial discrimination they will face with potential employers (see attached).

Race Matters staff led the group through two separate exercises to "test drive" the use of their Racial Equity Impact Analysis and Backmapping tools. The Seattle team applied the REIA tool to the emerging development of a student handbook for Airport University students, and looked at a student handbook from an integrated High School 21+/Open Doors program in Spokane as an example. South Seattle College was also interested in using this tool to improve flyers for their various manufacturing training programs; we did not have time to look at the flyers at the meeting and will do so in subsequent local meetings in alignment with/part of the upcoming Puget Sound ESD's Racial Equity workshops.

The Seattle team looked at disaggregated Census data that BERK Consulting shared with SkillUp/CCER showing the high percentage of Hispanic youth who are working without a high school diploma in comparison to White, Black, and Other Non-White racial groups in South King County. Of the 9,304 "Working Opportunity Youth" in South King County working without a diploma, 48.5% are Hispanic. CCER and King County are working on an outreach strategy to engage Hispanic/

Latino youth, families, and programs to better understand why, despite being the largest racial/ethnic group participating in regional Open Doors programs, they are consistently under-represented among credential earners each quarter and annually (see attached Improving Re-engagement Experience of Latino Youth summary). Given that, the team felt this exercise might help identify potential questions to ask and/or stakeholders to pursue in these efforts.

SkillUp will follow-up with BERK to investigate whether we can see disaggregated data regarding various industries where these Working Opportunity Youth are employed. Available data shows that 65% of these young people work in the Entertainment, Retail, Construction and Professional Services industries. We would like to see whether these same trends apply to Hispanic youth. Assuming that they do, engaging organizations working in the Entertainment industry (the largest industry employing Working Opportunity Youth) such as Juma will be critical.

The group also discussed the need for more informed research/information about factors behind the high percentage of Hispanics in the Working Opportunity Youth population. If we decide to continue using the backmapping tool to inform partner engagement, investment strategies and program development, new partnerships with community-based organizations such as El Centro de la Raza and researchers, including from local Universities, will be critical to ensuring that the process is well informed and reflective of the community.

Evaluation Overview

MDRC researchers shared their emerging plan to evaluate the impact of Generation Work at the five local sites, focusing specifically on each partnership's ability to affect systems change in their local communities. They will be scheduling visits from August-October 2017 focusing on the following three questions:

1. What did the systems in the city/region look like prior to when the Generation Work initiative began?
2. How did the Generation Work partnership form? What factors shaped its structure, the dynamics and the planning year outcomes? Are organizations interacting with other organizations differently?
3. What systems change activities have been implemented so far and how are they going? Are organizations starting to change? Are the systems working any differently? Are organizations adopting new practices?

SkillUp will coordinate with MDRC to schedule the visit, including interviews with specific individuals involved in the Seattle Generation Work initiative.

Cleveland Site Visit

On the last day of the meeting we convened at the Young Adult Resource Center in downtown Cleveland, a new Youth One Stop center that features new braided funding and partnership opportunities between WIOA and TANF and connections to career pathway opportunities in Construction, Customer Service, Culinary/Hospitality, IT, Manufacturing, Healthcare and Water/Waste Treatment. Industry partnerships supported by [Towards Employment](#), a Generation Work partner, are strongly represented in these pathway opportunities, and two industry partners from the manufacturing and IT sectors participated in a panel discussion; young people who received services at the YRC also shared their stories.

The New Growth Group, a national workforce development consulting firm based in Cleveland, is supporting cross-system learning and capacity building networks for public, private and non-profit partners to learn about each other's work and build stronger partnerships. See [here](#) for more information.

Finally, the Fund for Our Economic Future, the Cleveland Foundation and the Mayor's Office shared their experience working together to build local capacity for aligned funding strategies that support young adults' career and employment goals. The Fund for Our Economic Future shared two reports to illustrate these experiences: [The Collaboration Handbook](#) and an MDRC-led [impact report](#) of Cleveland's implementation of WorkAdvance.