



Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable

W. K. Kellogg TRHT Community

2022
Annual Evaluation Report

On behalf of the Greater Buffalo Racial
Equity Roundtable and the Community
Foundation for Greater Buffalo.



Written by:
Jessica Tufte, M.P.H.
Heather Orom, Ph.D.
Lisa Kulka, M.Ed., M.S.
Ernesto Irizarry, M.S.

With contributions from:

Tommy McClam
Say Yes Buffalo

Antonina Simeti
Buffalo Purchasing Program

Seth Piccirillo & Karen Brown
The Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Rene Petties-Jones
National Federation for Just Communities

Ben Kerman, PhD
Ben Kerman Consulting

Design by Motherland Studio

2022

*This report is confidential and not for distribution or reproduction without the express permission of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

Contents

Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable: A Five Year Evaluation Lookback	3
Executive Summary	9
Year Five Timeline	15
Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER)	16
Business Leaders Task Force (BLTF) and Buffalo Purchasing Initiative (BPI)	22
Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable Reentry Coalition (RC)	40
Juvenile Justice Works (JJW)	50
Buffalo Niagara Partnership	62
My Brother’s Keeper - Boys and Young Men of Color Coalition (MBK-BMoC)	70
Racial Healing Circles	76
Racial Impact and Analysis Training (REIAT)	80
Youth Employment Coalition (YEC)	112
Appendix A	124
Appendix B	125
Appendix C	130
Appendix D	133
Appendix E	137
Appendix F	140
Appendix G	141
Appendix H	145
List of Acronyms	150
Evaluation Team Biographies	151

Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable: A Five Year Evaluation Lookback

This lookback summarizes progress by the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) over the past five years (2017 - 2022) and articulates emerging strengths and challenges of its development processes and organization. While details may be found in the five annual evaluation reports, this document highlights elements of the GBRER experience with possible implications for consideration by organizations, funders, and advocates committed to promoting race equity and an inclusive economy.

Overview

Since the outset of the GBRER in 2016, 350 partners were engaged across the now ten initiatives of the GBRER. Each of the coalitions followed similar developmental stages over time: recruiting a wide swath of partners, data gathering and shared learning, benchmarking promising practices, identifying priorities, planning, and finally implementation along with a combination of process and outcome evaluation. The history of the GBRER demonstrates the distinct advantages of having a large local foundation, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (Community Foundation), lead and support this type of work. They provide convening capacity, access to and knowledge of available funding streams, professional networks, and capacity to provide administrative support. The ability to recruit nationally-recognized consultants was another advantage that the Community Foundation provided the GBRER and its initiatives/coalitions at multiple junctures.

A Lookback in Numbers

- *In addition to the five-year Kellogg Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation grant, the GBRER secured an addition \$10M in funding*
- *The Buffalo Niagara Partnership influenced allocation of \$10 million that will help people who depend on public benefits advance their careers without falling off the benefits cliff*
- *During the three year Buffalo Purchasing Initiative (2019-2021) and Employ Buffalo Niagara pilot there was a \$42M net increase in spending with businesses owned by people of color among member organizations*
- *At the end of the pilot, Buffalo Purchasing Initiative members were working with 3X as many businesses owned by people of color as they were before the program pilot, resulting in 287 new contracts*
- *The Buffalo Niagara Partnership has executed 12 Career Pathway agreements with regional employers*
- *The Buffalo Niagara Partnership is collaborating with 20+ educational and community-based organizations to feature Career Pathways*
- *Over 3,500 individuals, including many C-suite leaders, have participated in the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Training*
- *Between 2020 and 2022, Boys and Men of Color provided intensive year-long youth mentorship and empowerment to 65 young men (97% of whom were African American); they participated in 260 sessions*
- *Juvenile Justice Works includes 52 members ranging from non-profit and county government staff to judges and local politicians*
- *The Reentry Coalition has grown to 85 members from across the Buffalo region*
- *From its opening in September 2020 through March 2022, the Service Link Stop served 495 reentering citizens*
- *Over 3,500 individuals have participated in the REIAT, many of whom are leaders and can influence practices and policies that undergird structural racism, such as unfair hiring and advancement practices or justice system and educational practices*
- *Approximately 80% of participating organizations reported improvements in their understanding of structural racism and their capacity to take action contributing to increasing equity*

The Process: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing

The GBRRER and coalitions developed their goals and initiatives through a sequence of team development and planning stages: recruiting partners, data gathering and shared learning, benchmarking, identifying priorities, planning, and finally implementation along with a combination of process and outcome evaluation. The aspiration for the coalitions is increasing autonomy and perhaps independent sustainability to achieve long term and enduring systems change. Each initiative/coalition has progressed at different speeds along this continuum. After more than five years of consistent forward momentum in the GBRRER, all coalitions are in the implementation phase and most are beginning to see impact on economic opportunity in communities of color.

An indicator of GBRRER success at systems change is the degree to which the 10 initiatives have become networked with ties that facilitate exchanges of resources including connections, knowledge and skills. The later emerging coalitions and initiatives such as the Youth Employment Coalition have benefitted from these denser networks. For example, Say Yes Buffalo, the backbone organization for Boys and Men of Color is now creating the Youth Employment Data Dashboard. Boys and Men of Color youth provide a youth perspective on the youth employment hub. The Business Leaders Taskforce members are being engaged to participate in the Youth Employment Coalition apprenticeship program. As these networks expand both in size and density, and exchange of resources across initiatives increases, the GBRRER as a whole becomes more productive and powerful at making change.

Challenges have been similar across coalitions: time needed to understand the history, context, and nature of structural racism in a given system, addressing concerns about equitable sharing of resources and opportunities among coalition members, pandemic-related holds on projects and resource expenditures, and building trusting relationships among members. As expected, two years of meeting online has somewhat impaired and slowed relationship building, the basis of the GBRRER's work. The Community Foundation has tried to nevertheless create opportunities for relationship building, including interacting in small groups, icebreakers, and role-playing exercises. Nonetheless, members remain engaged and believe they are having impact, their participation is valued and they themselves gain something of value from participating. Community Foundation staff make considerable effort to plan meetings and retreats, so that attendees feel the experiences were "well worth their time."

The Critical Role of the Community Foundation in GBRER Success

Communities across the United States are attempting transformational anti-racist work to undo systemic racism. The GBRER is a case study in how this work can be led by a regional community foundation along with the advantages and potential challenges of this approach. The first advantage is that community foundations have easier access to funding compared to other kinds of groups often engaged in this kind of work, including grassroots coalitions. The second is that they also tend to be networked with and have the ability to engage other organizations and people in the community with influence and resources. The GBRER was intended to be a “grasstops” initiative at its outset, with the intention of creating systems change through networks of community leaders committed to use their networks, influence and resources to create system change. This means that the intention of the GBRER has always been to shift policies and organizational practices through a racial equity lens applied by individuals with influence and power. The 350 partners now represent grasstops, grass shoots, and grassroots organizations.

The third advantage is that initiatives such as the GBRER, with multiple coalitions and ongoing projects, need considerable administrative support and community foundations often have the capacity to provide this support. Throughout the evaluation period, survey and interview participants consistently acknowledged the importance of the coordinating efforts of the Community Foundation staff and the consultants the Foundation selected and supported. Most members also expressed that they do not have the time to assist in coordinating the meetings and other activities that make the GBRER possible.

The fourth advantage of community foundation leadership is they have the resources and organizational reputation to contract with nationally-recognized consultants and connect with similarly-focused foundations for the purpose of shared learning. These connections have helped Buffalo incorporate successful models from other communities.

Grasstops interventions do face challenges, including a risk of being out of touch with the needs and preferences of the individuals for whom the systems change is supposed to benefit. Even though the priorities identified by the GBRER and its initiatives/coalitions are based on local data, the strategies and solutions generated by a grasstop effort might be out of step with community priorities and wishes. Over the last five years, GBRER members have expressed wanting to see more information about the work of the GBRER and its initiatives/coalitions being disseminated within the community and inclusion of grassroots community members has continued to grow.

Systems Change

Systems change is accomplished with changes to policies, practices, the flow of resources and power, networks, and mindsets. Systems change contrasts with program delivery, where resources are provided, typically to a relatively small number of individuals, in an effort to solve a discrete problem. Programs generally mitigate, but do not attempt to solve more fundamental structural problems. For example, food pantries can mitigate the impact of poverty on food insecurity but do not solve poverty and wealth inequality.

A guiding goal of the GBRRER is systems change that undoes systemic racism in our public and private sector systems (e.g., justice system, corporations) with a guiding goal of creating a more equitable economy in the Buffalo Region. The Racial Equity Impact Analysis Training aims to shift organizational leaders to an equity mindset, followed by changes to organizational practices and policies that promote equity. The training has the potential to help leaders “see” structural racism and build in procedures for analyzing policy decisions, so that negative consequences that disproportionately impact people of color can be avoided. The Racial Impact Analysis Training is currently informing how the Buffalo court system is implementing their Equal Justice Initiative (an effort as part of state-level initiatives to reduce youth incarceration and racial inequality in that process). As part of the Equal Justice Initiative, the court system is using tools from the training related to make strong improvements to its professional development efforts. The family court system has also allocated resources for 60 members of family court to engage in REIAT training. This will inform all aspects of the court’s juvenile support work as it moves forward, which is unprecedented and has paved the way for a paradigm shift in juvenile justice processes.

Another potential catalyst of systems change is the benefits cliff calculator (see the Buffalo Niagara Partnership section). If adopted, this tool for predicting the impact of compensation increases on eligibility for public benefits could change how employers in the Buffalo region support employee advancement, with a goal of reducing barriers to advancement that disproportionately affect people of color. The BPI has made headway in changing how major employers do procurement, providing supports for new purchasing procedures that prioritize awarding contracts to businesses owned by people of color. Infrastructure changes such as tracking databases help make these changes sustainable. The Youth Employment Data Dashboard for tracking youth employment activities among existing agencies is another tool that may help guide systems change, improving how opportunity youth connect with employment resources. Finally, Juvenile Justice Works, the Youth Employment Coalition, and Reentry Coalition have helped organizations make new connections with one another, laying a foundation for more collaboration, presumed to be a condition for systems change.

Not all of the GBRRER activities aspire to systems change, such as mindset change, creating connections for collaboration, or changing policies and practices. Some

initiatives lean more toward gaps in programmatic service delivery than transforming existing systems. The Service Link Stop, a brick and mortar and soon to be live online source of services, implements the Reentry Coalition's top priority. It is a more coordinated approach to reentry services, supported by Erie County with integrated resources from multiple service providers. Similarly, the Youth Employment Coalition's physical and virtual hubs are intended to fill gaps in service coordination and access to services.

Recommendations

To nurture systems change thinking among the coalition and GBRER members, the Community Foundation might consider new opportunities for collaborative learning about systems change frameworks and strategies to promote systems change. With repeated exposure to these ideas, coalition members will continue to advocate for, or innovate ways to transform systems that disadvantage people or color.

Executive Summary

Over the course of the last TRHT evaluation year from June 1st, 2021 through May 31st, 2022, CCNY, Inc. evaluated the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER), as well as three of its 10 initiatives/coalitions, including the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable Reentry Coalition (RC), the Juvenile Justice Works Coalition (JJW), and the Youth Employment Coalition (YEC). Additional evaluations of Employ Buffalo Niagara (Employ), the Boys and Men of Color Initiative (MBK-BMoC), Racial Healing Circles, and the Business Leaders Task Force (BLTF)/Buffalo Purchasing Initiative (BPI) are incorporated. (See Appendix A for the GBRER Coalition/Initiative structure.)

This report reveals the processes by which several of the groups listed above achieve vision and goal alignment, sustain commitment from their members, build trust and productive relationships between members, and how all of these groups have begun to impact the wider community. Critical dimensions for understanding the GBRER's quality and impact include member collaboration, empowering individuals and organizations to take action to impact racial equity within their own organizations, networks, decision-making processes, and whether efforts have contributed to systems change. Efforts to change narratives about race are incorporated throughout the work of all coalitions and referenced throughout the report. Furthermore, facilitators of success and potential challenges for each coalition/initiative are identified.

Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER)

Over the last year, GBRER members continued to learn about GBRER initiative and coalition work while recruiting more participants for REIA Training. Members still felt that the networking opportunities and knowledge-sharing that occurs on the GBRER have been impactful to their racial-equity related work outside of the GBRER at their own organizations and beyond. Moving forward, the GBRER should continue to cultivate opportunities for the “champions” – members of the GBRER who advocate for and promote the work of the GBRER and its coalitions/initiatives – to have a wider impact, including strategizing around explicit ways in which members can play the role of champion to an even greater extent and share impactful strategies with each other.

Business Leaders Task Force (BLTF)

The Buffalo Purchasing Initiative (BPI), the primary initiative of the Business Leaders Task Force (BLTF). In 2021, the group saw a decrease in spending with businesses owned by people of color overall, while continued substantial increases in the development of supplier relationships occurred due to increased exposure to vendors, outreach, and invitations to businesses owned by people of color to participate in procurement opportunities. Tools were improved, and the forthcoming BPI website should help solidify BPI’s infrastructure and operations in 2022.

Greater Buffalo Racial Equality Roundtable Reentry Coalition (RC)

The Reentry Coalition (RC) continues to function with the support of the Community Foundation, serving as a central network of reentry-focused organizations and programs. The Coalition centers its operations around the reentry initiatives led by organization leaders and RC members; these initiatives are the Service Link Stop (SLS), the New Dawn Initiative, Project Blue, and the Erie County Reentry Task Force. In addition, the participation of the existing 85 members has expanded reentry efforts beyond the scope of work of these initiatives as reentry knowledge, resource, and partnerships are introduced into members' respective organizations and social networks.

Despite challenges to member engagement presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (as seen in the limitations of interpersonal communication in online-based meetings), efforts of the RC leadership and the Community Foundation to ensure successful decision-making processes have resulted in the continued operations of the coalition. The use of a steering committee as a reliable structure for decision-making and coalition change implementation is largely due to the influence of member feedback and comments throughout quarterly meetings.

Collaboration between members has also been integral in the coalition's operations, with joint efforts between organizations resulting in reentry projects such as the SLS, and the currently under development, virtual hub. Due to the RC's function as a central resource for reentry-focused organizations and individuals, it has served as a platform to generate new partnerships stemming from shared goals and visions between participants. These partnerships have resulted in the creation of projects designed to help the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals and have increased the knowledge of available resources to other coalition members. Importantly, the new sheriff expressed strong commitment to a continued partnership with the RC.

Given that the implementation of all initiatives is currently taking place, with the development of the virtual hub also occurring, additional opportunities for assessing the impact on the reentry community may become available. In addition, an evaluation of the outputs these initiatives have produced within the community and with organization leaders to enact systems change can also be performed.

Juvenile Justice Works (JJW)

The third full evaluation of the JJW occurred during the current evaluation year. On the whole, JJW members have remained highly engaged, motivated, and unified under common objectives to formulate and implement tangible strategies for community impact. Based on survey results, meeting observations, and individual interviews, the members agree that the transition from information-gathering/relationship-building to group expansion, identification of concrete objectives and projected outcomes of the coalition, and initial identification of community solutions and strategies has definitely occurred. The Coalition has expanded in scope to include four workgroups designed to further advance its core mission, which include the BPS Code of Conduct and Restorative Practices Work Group, the Training and Development Work Group, the Community Policing/NET + Diversion Work Group, and the Probation Work Group, and these working groups have made substantive progress toward meeting their goals over the last evaluation year. A number of collaborations outside of the JJW itself have provided promise for the future impact of the workgroups and the overall coalition, particularly with respect to bringing previously disconnected stakeholders in the juvenile justice system together. Additionally, respectful and authentic dialogue and collaboration have been perpetuated as a result of the effective leadership structure facilitated by Felicia Beard of CFGB as well as individual workgroup leaders. This leadership structure has promoted professional connection among various group members and their respective organizations, and have allowed the coalition and workgroups to meet its initial objectives. In the context of progress, members have indicated that group work has begun to advance to implementation of identified community strategies and solutions, and more progress is highly anticipated. In addition, different paces of progress have been observed across work groups, and greater cohesion across the groups is necessary. Logistical support provided by the Community Foundation continues to create forward momentum in anticipation of executing strategies for creating change in the region's juvenile justice systems.

Buffalo Niagara Partnership (BNP)

The Buffalo Niagara Partnership's (BNP) Diversity and Inclusion (DEI) programming aims to increase inclusion in the workplace. The DEI programming was developed in response to feedback received from its members via a survey, in-person meetings, and DEI Executive Council meetings. The overwhelming message was that organizations want to make their workplaces more diverse and inclusive. They recognized that achieving this requires attention and resources, but many did not know how to best access assistance. Moving into 2022, major activities include the implementation of the Benefits Cliff Calculator, a free online tool that calculates an individual's benefit cliff. Employees, employers, and workforce entities can better understand how

potential income increases impact employees to gain a better understanding of how employees can thrive, businesses can promote promising talent, and how all members of our region can be carried toward financial security and independence. Additionally, the Employ Buffalo Niagara Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Collaborative is underway and beginning to structure clear pathways for skilled workers to get paired with appropriate positions and for people to upskill into better paying positions.

My Brother's v and Young Men of Color Coalition (MBK-BMoC)

The MBK-BMoC is a coalition of youth, community members, foundations, education professionals, public health professionals, juvenile justice community members, and leaders in government working toward accelerating positive outcomes for boys and young men of color across the cradle-to-career continuum. From its inception, the MBK-BMoC Coalition has pursued two main developmental areas: policy/program capacity building and data/structural capacity building.

The Coalition continues to work toward improving the lives of young men of color in the region through partnerships with organizations like the Buffalo Public Schools, local government, and other nonprofits. The Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council (BBYLC) continues to make progress on policy and narrative changes around young men of color as well as increasing community awareness and voice for young men of color.

Racial Healing Circles

Buffalo was selected by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg) as one of 14 sites to implement Kellogg's "Truth, Racial Healing, Transformation" (TRHT) framework. The TRHT framework consists of five components: narrative change, racial healing and relationship building, separation, law, and the economy. Narrative change and racial healing and relationship building, in part, through the implementation of Racial Healing Circles are overarching themes that flow throughout the entire framework and are the focus of this work. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation trained Racial Healing Circle facilitators locally at the outset of the TRHT grant period.

The strategy selected by the GBRER to introduce Racial Healing Circles into the Western New York Area is an inter-congregational strategy. Over the last two and a half years, the National Federation for Just Communities (NFJC) has taken over the administration of Racial Healing Circles. Racial Healing Circles are an opportunity for

people of different backgrounds to proactively come together in a circle to dialogue about race and race related issues. People who engage in Racial Healing Circles are ready to experience the circle process with a focus on racial healing and are interested in learning how to bring racial conversations to their community. Demand for Racial Healing Circles remains high, similarly to the last evaluation year.

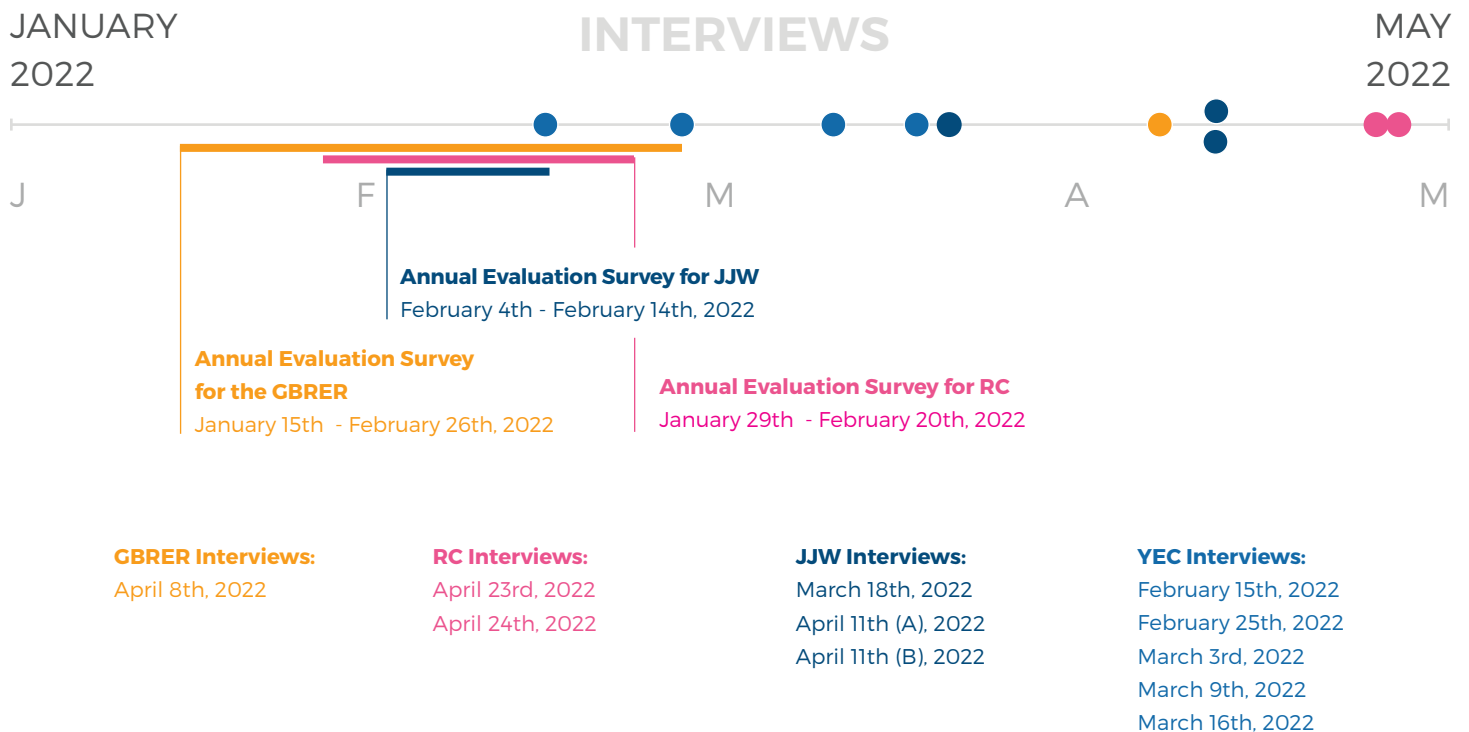
Racial Equity Impact and Analysis Training (REIAT)

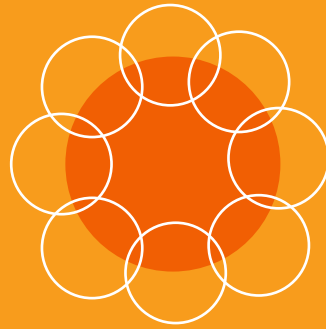
By design, initiative activities continued to focus in evaluation years 4 and 5 on providing training to organizations in Greater Buffalo who expressed interest in using their operations and position to contribute to increasing racial equity internally and across the broader community. In addition to training for organizational leaders and selected staff, participation involves identification of “coaches” who advocate for the application of the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Tool to a variety of organizational functions. Case studies of four local organizations that participated in REIA Training are included.

Youth Employment Coalition (YEC)

The Buffalo Youth Employment Coalition (YEC) was convened in July 2020 and, in approximately two years, has made considerable progress along what is now an established development process for GBRER coalitions: mapping the system (collecting data to understand existing resources and gaps), collective learning, planning, and implementation. The YEC brings together nearly all of the organizations involved in or connected with youth employment in the Buffalo region with a plan for coordinating and increasing access to these services. The YEC is advancing on five pillars: use of data to inform decisions and programs, employer/industry engagement, moving from programs to pathways, youth apprenticeship, and youth engagement. Fundraising for these initiatives has been highly successful. Progress continues toward creating a physical and virtual hub where young people can access employment-related services and a data dashboard for tracking youth employment activities. There are opportunities for messaging how this infrastructure will build the capacity of organizations that connect young people with employment opportunities, centering the youth voice in decision making and adding additional staff support.

Year Five Timeline





**Greater Buffalo Racial
Equity Roundtable
(GBRER)**

Background

The GBRER was founded by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (the “Community Foundation”) in 2015 with the vision that “Buffalo has a shared future, where racial equity will create prosperity and opportunity for everyone in our region.” GBRER has grown to include 31 champions from public, private, non-profit, and faith-based sectors since its establishment, investing approximately six years in shared learning, trust building, and collaboratively identifying priorities for developing economic racial equity in Buffalo, NY.

The partners of the GBRER are working toward systems change in the six systems change coalitions listed below.

(See Appendix A for the GBRER Coalition/Initiative structure.)

Systems Change

- *Juvenile Justice Works (JJW)*
- *Employ Buffalo Niagara*
- *MBK-Boys & Men of Color Coalition (MBK-BMoC)*
- *Reentry Coalition (RC)*
- *Business Leaders Task Force (BLTF)*
- *Youth Employment Coalition (YEC)*

Creating Conditions for Change Initiatives

- *Community Engagement and Awareness Workgroup/Narrative Change*
- *Racial Equity Impact Analysis (REIA) Training*
- *Racial Healing Circles*
- *Buffalo Niagara Partnership Diversity & Inclusion Council (DEI Council)*

Methods

The GBRER evaluation findings are based on a review of meeting notes and an interview with the President/CEO and Senior Director of Racial Equity Initiatives for the Community Foundation. The evaluation team fielded a survey to all GBRER members about member changes in awareness and knowledge about racial equity since joining the group, ability to make the business case for racial equity in various networks, and perceived and concrete impacts related to racial equity rooted in the GBRER. (See Appendix B for the blank survey.) Members of the GBRER are referred to as “champions” in this report to distinguish them from the broader conceptualization of the GBRER as encompassing the 10 initiatives creating conditions for change and the systems change coalitions. Four reminders went out to 31 champions who had accurate email addresses. Twenty-one completed the survey for a 68% response rate.

GBRER Champions

The GBRER refers to both the entirety of the four initiatives that create conditions of change and six systems change coalitions (see Appendix A) and the group of champions (currently 31), who engage the community in the original planning for these initiatives and continue to play a facilitating role in these initiatives. Because of their leadership positions in the Buffalo region, the champions are able to use their extensive social capital to advance the GBRER initiatives: “they open doors and help negotiate barriers.” They also provide input and tangible support to initiatives. Some are active in the coalitions and initiatives for creating conditions for change but this is not required. The President of the Community Foundation describes the GBRER as “the rich soil that grew this absolutely continually expanding tree with many branches that all root in the members of the Roundtable [GBRER].”

In the past year, the GBRER champions have continued to function in the roles of connectors and promoters of GBRER initiatives. The Community Foundation has given more time to cultivating members’ ability to promote GBRER programs and products more widely. Meetings have always served to keep members abreast of the progress of the 10 initiatives/coalitions. During this past year, there has been sustained attention to coaching members of the GBRER to be ambassadors for GBRER initiatives/coalitions. For example, one quarterly meeting included a training on how to frame inequities in terms of potential gains that will engage allies while not promoting negative stereotypes. In another meeting, participants were coached on promoting the benefits cliff calculator.

The benefits cliff calculator is an online tool developed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, with financial support from the Community Foundation. It gives employers and employees receiving public

benefits, individualized, real-time information on the impact a salary raise or bonus would have on their benefits and income. Many employees face a significant loss of benefits (i.e., a benefits cliff) if they receive modest salary increases or bonuses. The GBRER can play a role in promoting use of the benefits calculator among Buffalo employers. This was exemplified at the 2022 first quarterly meeting. The CEO of a large group of auto dealerships volunteered to sponsor an event where business leaders would be invited to learn about the benefits cliff calculator. This exemplified private sector organizations willingness and ability to use its resources and influence to advance the GBRER work and could be a model for future deep engagement from members.

Engagement

Champion engagement has been healthy during the past year. Meetings are attended by about two-thirds of members and participation in the annual survey was similar (21 responses; 68%).

Perceptions of GBRER progress

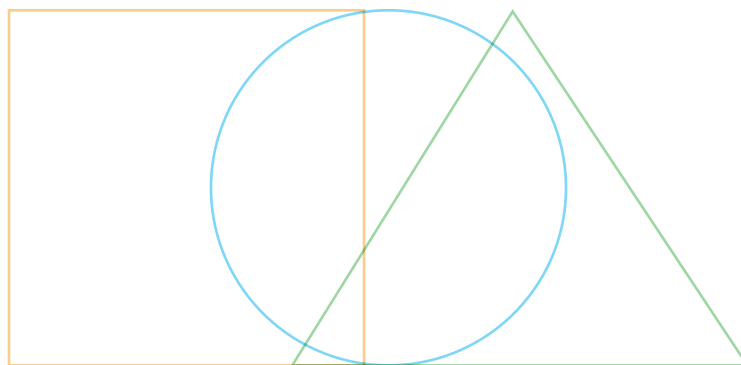
Members who responded to the annual survey were modestly enthusiastic about the GBRER's impact. When asked how much impact they believed coalition/initiatives are having on communities of color, the modal response for all initiatives was "moderate" impact. Among respondents, 50% are "very pleased" and the other 50% "moderately pleased" with the GBRER progress. Confidence in the GBRER's ability to impact systems change was similarly split between "very confident" and "moderately confident". Last year, we noted that some respondents were not aware of GBRER initiatives. This year, 5-22% of respondents reported not being aware enough of a given initiative to appraise its impact.

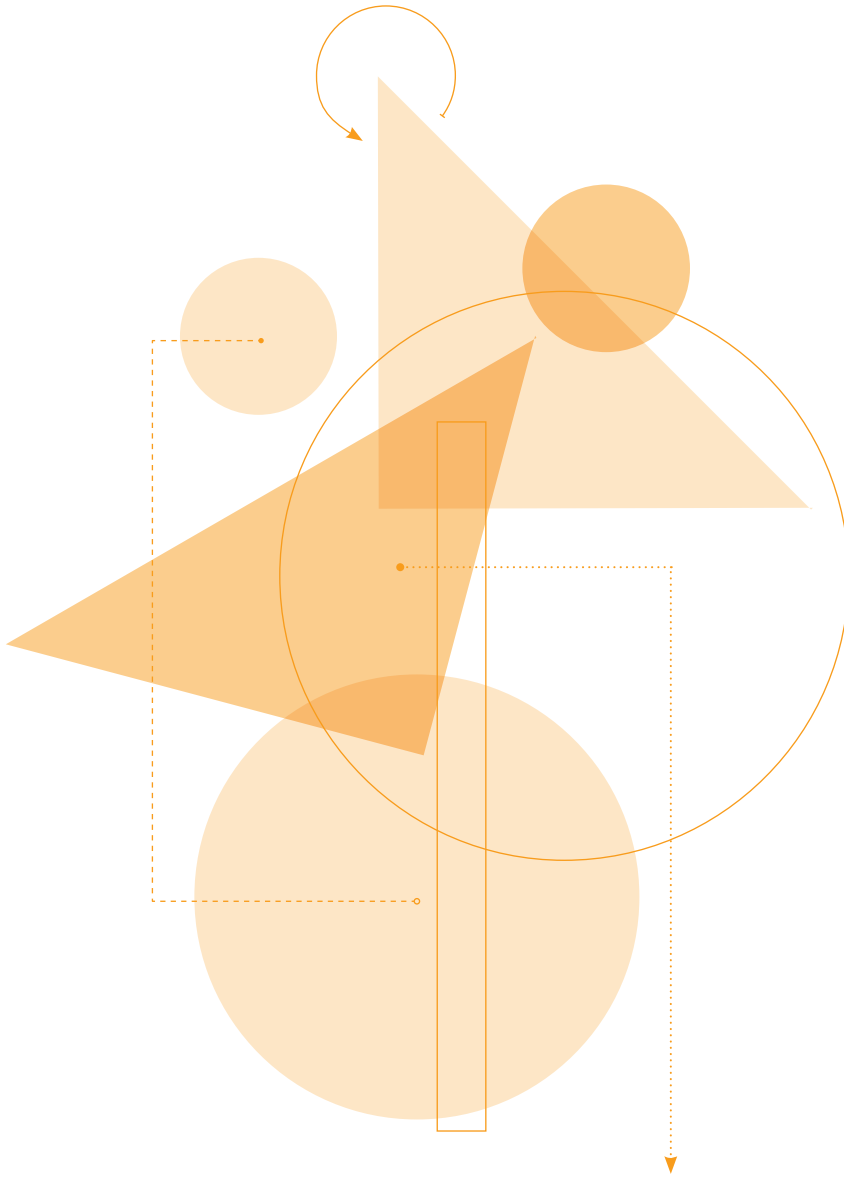
Examples of how the GBRER can have a wider impact

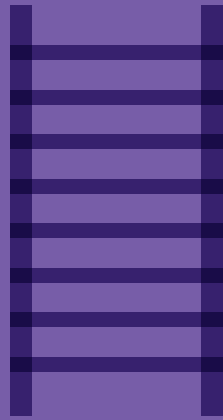
One of the goals for the GBRER is for members to promote systems change in organizations across the Buffalo region. Members do believe that they are learning about resources to help them with their racial equity work through the GBRER (95%), although only two-thirds (67%) were sure that these resources helped their own organization advance their work. One example of when a GBRER member promoted systems change in another organization, was when a GBRER member who, because of their membership on a board of a utility company that is a major regional employer, facilitated that organization's participation in the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Training (REIAT).

Recommendations

- 1** Continue to cultivate opportunities for the champions to have a wider impact. Communication training likely increases confidence in champions' abilities to promote GBRER initiatives/coalitions to a larger network.
- 2** Concrete strategizing and "homework" for members could help them to play this role to an even greater extent.
- 3** Consider a way for members to share how they are promoting the GBRER initiatives in the Greater Buffalo community in order to encourage one another and share winning strategies.







**Business Leaders Task
Force (BLTF)
and
Buffalo Purchasing
Initiative (BPI)**

Written by Antonina Simeti

Program Director,
Buffalo Purchasing Initiative

Background

The primary initiative of the Business Leader’s Task Force (BLTF) is the Buffalo Purchasing Initiative (BPI), a coordinated effort to increase purchasing of goods and services from businesses owned by people of color by its 14 member organizations. This section summarizes overall progress of the BPI in 2021 as well as the priorities for BPI efforts in 2022 (reflective of the work of 12/14 of its members). In 2021, the group saw a decrease in spending with businesses owned by people of color overall, while continued substantial increases in the development of supplier relationships occurred due to increased exposure to vendors, outreach, and invitations to businesses owned by people of color to participate in procurement opportunities. Tools were improved, and the forthcoming BPI website should help solidify BPI’s infrastructure and operations in 2022.

2021 Progress

1. Overall Spend Shift

BPI collects spend data twice per year. The “Year-End Spend Review,” which includes spending from December 1st, 2020, through November 30th, 2021, is intended to benchmark actual spending against targets and establish future goals. The following summarizes key findings from the 2021 Year-End Spend Review.

Spend Update

At the end of 2020, BPI set a collective goal to spend \$22,000,000 with businesses of color over 12 months. As of November 30th, 2021, the 12 members have spent \$17,390,125 which is \$4.6M below collective spend goal for 2020 and \$3.1M below the collective 2020 spend. While this is the first instance where BPI’s collective spend dipped below the previous year, the explanation for this trend is quite clear. The decrease is the product of three vendor relationships:

- *Two major IT/computer equipment contracts billed significantly less than their “peak billing” of 2020. In one instance, the 2021 contract remained one of BPI’s largest, it was simply lower than 2020.*
- *One large PPE purchase that did not repeat once an organization stabilized with their historic, national supplier. They had warned us that this was a possibility. These natural fluctuations in capital/IT equipment will always play a role in fluctuating spend targets. Despite the one year decrease, collective spend remains 66% above the 2018 baseline (\$10,500,000), and all other indicators moved in a positive direction in 2021.*

Supplier Update

BPI members continued the trend of working with more local businesses of color than ever before. In 2021, BPI members worked with a total of 93 discrete businesses of color (with 130 unique supplier relationships across these suppliers). Both metrics are above 2020 numbers and the number of discrete suppliers is 170% above the establishment of the 2018 baseline (34 suppliers).

Key Spend Categories Update

Historically, construction, architecture/engineering, IT/computing, and PPE (a recent addition from 2020) comprise the majority of BPI members’ spending with local businesses owned by people of color. This trend continued in 2021 as BPI members continued to spend high volumes within these categories. As referenced earlier in this document, spending was down with IT and PPE by 45% and 50%, respectively. Conversely, spend was up within construction and architecture by 10% and 40%, respectively. BPI members made the most progress in 2021 in what we call “mid-level categories.” These categories may not reach the same peaks as construction or IT in terms of annual billing, but they provide solid opportunities for year-over-year sustained supplier growth. In addition, these are categories in which BPI staff have focused a high degree of energy over the last few years. These five category segments and their respective 2021 spend patterns are:

- *Custodial, Grounds, Environmental: \$1.2M across 8 suppliers (up 25% from 2020)*
- *Staffing, HR, and Development: \$650K across 10 suppliers (up 130% from 2020)*
- *Security Guard Services: \$550K across 4 suppliers (up 80% from 2020)*
- *Food: \$275K across 14 suppliers (up 500% from 2020)*
- *Marketing and Creative Services: \$250K across 12 suppliers (up 40% from 2020)*

In 2021, these five category segments represented \$2.90M in collective spend, which is 250% above what BPI members spent in these categories in the benchmarking year (\$800K, which represented 7% of all local).

Connecting BPI Introductions to Matches

In 2021, BPI staff made a commitment to do a better job of tracking the direct impact that arises from introducing suppliers to the group. In 2021, BPI introduced 13 suppliers directly through collective matchmaking activities. At the end of the year, these 13 businesses secured 24 individual connections to BPI members, 17 of which were tied to spending opportunities. Of those 17, 10 were successful for ~\$1.66M.

Tracking this metric over BPI's entire lifespan is challenging because direct causation cannot be established with certainty. Since 2019, BPI introduced 33 suppliers directly through collective matchmaking efforts. In 2021, 56 connections between these businesses and BPI members, 42 of which were tied to spending opportunities. Of those 42, 30 were successful for ~\$3.85M. We will continue to refine and evolve this metric each year.

Tier 2 Spending

BPI will continue to track Tier 1 direct spend (when spend goes directly from the contracting company to the company they contracted) as our primary metric. Tracking Tier 1 spend is critical for several reasons; from a practical standpoint, it is the only type of data that can be standardized across all fourteen organizations as not all BPI members track subcontractors, have a mechanism to track subcontractors, or influence the selection of subcontractors (e.g., through policy or contractual obligations). Beyond the practicalities, there was regular feedback from local suppliers as to the importance of forging direct relationships for long term business growth (as opposed to being in a "Tier 2" position/subcontractor to a business). Additionally, tracking Tier 1 spend pushes BPI members to take more agency in directly influencing wins. That said, Tier 2/subcontracting spend is important for several members, especially those who are public facing, and is tracked in detail by them. Therefore, BPI organizations have the opportunity to submit Tier 2 data moving forward if it is available, and it will be benchmarked independently of their direct spend patterns and targets. In 2021, only three of the 14 BPI members provided Tier 2 data. In 2021, these three members collectively spent an additional \$10,711,638 with local businesses owned by people of color across 45 individual subcontracting (Tier 2) relationships.

Unfortunately, there is not a clear baseline against which to measure 2021 subcontracting spend, so it is difficult to know whether these numbers are an increase over prior years or not. BPI will continue to collect this data from these three members (as well as any other members who are willing and able to share) and report future growth.

Challenges and Opportunities

Capital/IT Fluctuations

Construction and IT equipment continue to be an important source of contract opportunities for local businesses of color. Since this spend is not consistent year-over-year and based on project cycles, it can easily lead to dips in spending. A member of BPI may continue to work with many businesses of color, but the absence of one large capital purchase may make it seem that they are “spending less” with businesses of color, even as the reality is more nuanced. It will be important for BPI to continue to evolve its metrics to account for this.

PPE and supply chain resiliency

As anticipated, overall PPE purchases dropped significantly in 2021 across the membership, but especially for local businesses of color. As BPI members indicated, once national supply chain linkages were rebuilt, they returned to purchasing from contracted national distributors rather than companies that were able to fulfill orders under emergency conditions. Given the demonstrated reliability of these local suppliers to fill the gap when they were needed, it seems there should be more opportunity to permanently shift some of this spending to those vendors. This would both mitigate the risk purchasers face when reliant on only one or a small number of vendors, and simultaneously support local vendors that can do the job. This could be an opportunity for supply chain resiliency that would help local vendors to grow and ultimately achieve greater economies of scale and thereby benefit all the purchasing entities in the region.

2. Outreach and Procurement Opportunities (leading indicators)

Tracking Individual Outreach and Opportunities

These “leading indicators” help BPI to understand progress in between bi-annual spend analyses to document outreach trends and to remain apprised of upcoming purchasing opportunities. All leading indicators moved on a positive trajectory in 2021 compared to the previous year.

From December 1st, 2020 through November 30th, 2021, at least 157 individual connections were made between our BPI members and 100+ unique businesses of color through outreach or through specific procurement opportunities. Members reached out to 74 new businesses, almost twice the number in 2020. BPI members notified us of 83 unique procurement opportunities (e.g., RFP, bid, etc.) in which

businesses of color were invited to participate. Of the 78 tracked opportunities that closed by November 2021:

- *47% were awarded to business of color*
- *24% had a business opt not to bid or not respond at all*
- *17% had BPI members withdraw the opportunity for internal reasons (Note that this number was much higher than previous years due to continuing uncertainty around COVID-19)*
- *6% had responses where businesses lacked qualifications*
- *5% had responses where the proposed price was too high*

This tracking tool has played a critical role in helping to identify new opportunities and to document recurring challenges. However, BPI is still working to get as close to 100% reporting as possible from members, as well as better understand why businesses are not bidding or being unresponsive to invitations to bid/submit proposals.

Challenges and Opportunities

Motivating member outreach to suppliers

In 2021, BPI enacted thematic monthly challenges to help drive up Purchasing Council (PC) outreach (e.g., Black History month, April “spring cleaning”). PC members reported that having monthly goals was helpful for motivating outreach and important for focusing those outreach activities on specific relevant sectors. In addition, suppliers have reported to BPI that meeting a buyer and building the relationship over time is a far more effective way of being engaged than being first contacted by a buyer when an opportunity is imminent, and a deadline is quickly approaching. Urging buyers to preemptively reach out to suppliers and regularly “fill the rolodex” is an important role the BPI continues to play for members.

Feedback loop and debriefing

While BPI members are changing procedures to better connect with suppliers on the front-end (e.g., through outreach) there is still a need for better contact with suppliers to understand and address why we are seeing missed contract opportunities (i.e., through declination or lack of response), as well as why suppliers are not winning work. BPI focused on the debriefing process in 2021 to understand failed matches and found that while a select few members explicitly offer suppliers the opportunity for a debriefing conversation when an opportunity is not won (especially those legally required to do so), many members do not provide a supplier the details of the lost bid or unselected proposal - it is merely not their practice to do so. The PCI has had conversations and shared best practices for debriefing, but BPI aims to better collect

information on debriefing in 2022, as well as continue to urge its members to engage in the process going forward. This process is important for providing suppliers with critical information for success, as well as helping to keep those suppliers positive and motivated and likely to try again in the future.

3. Capacity Building for Businesses Owned by People of Color

Business Serving Organization (BSO) Relationships

In 2021, BPI focused on its work with the Buffalo State Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which included supplier referrals, vetting, and capacity building program collaboration. Work with Pursuit Lending and LISC continues and includes referring businesses to BPI, sharing program and supports available for distribution to suppliers in the BPI network and general information sharing about community business trends. BPI began working relationships with the Women's Business Center at Canisius College and the Ibero Business Center and EforAll at Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and anticipates more formal collaborations with them in 2022.

2021 BSO partnership outcomes

Small Business Development Center/Buffalo State:

- *Eight referrals, all eight participated in BPI supplier pitches and four contracts were secured*
- *Collaboration on one round of MWBE Capacity Building training program, and one round of Open 4 Marketing and Contract Readiness program:*
- *BPI helped to recruit suppliers to participate in training*
- *Four BPI members led "How to Work With Us" sessions during course, meeting over 30 new suppliers*
- *Three clients/graduating businesses conducted online "BPI Supplier Pitches" through which two contracts were secured*
- *Women's Business Center (Canisius) Allyship Program*
- *BPI participated in Ally training*
- *Mentored two MBWE's and referred them to BPI members*

Direct Impact on Businesses

The initiative is still young, and BPI does not currently have sufficient data to do a quantitative analysis to determine its holistic impact on BPI-affiliated businesses. Instead, BPI interviewed three businesses in 2021 that were known to be having success with the membership. The following is a summary of the impacts work with BPI members has had on these businesses, as told by their owners:

Rodriguez Construction (Luis Rodriguez, CEO): Although they had worked with some BPI members before, Rodriguez Construction reports an increase in work with them since their “reintroduction” in 2019 – this has helped to reinforce the relationships with those members they knew plus lend the credibility to help them get hired by other members. Rodriguez has worked as a prime contractor with 5 BPI members since in 2019, accounting for \$10.6M in revenue. All their growth has been reinvested in the company and allowed Luis to expand their dumpster division. He shared that some of the biggest challenges in working with large institutions are: “breaking in” to a Tier 1 role (even if you have subbed for a company) when there are long standing relationships with other general contractors; getting beyond procurement staff to get know the day-to-day project managers in order to demonstrate your qualifications; turnaround for complicated RFPs (e.g. 10 days from RFP release); and contract labor requirements that aren’t realistic for small, younger businesses (e.g. superintendents with 10+ years of experience rather than specific project experience, or apprenticeship program requirements). He expressed that repeat work is important for sustainability, and that the biggest benefit of repeated work with a client is getting to know the specific “ins and outs” of the organization and its facilities. He thinks repeated work is facilitated by structures like “term contracts” that keep the company on call for small projects that allow for consistent revenue.

Beautiful Brains (Christian Johnson, CEO): Beautiful Brains was introduced to BPI as an IT consultant and hardware provider, with some connections to medical goods manufacturers. The surge of demand for PPE during 2020 found the company in an advantageous position with its direct relationships with manufacturers, and able to help fill the local supply gaps for goods. Since 2019, BPI members have spent \$5M with Beautiful Brains mostly for PPE and medical goods. With revenues increasing 10x since 2020, Beautiful Brains has grown to become a multi-million-dollar company with clients spanning from WNY to South Africa, attributed in part to relationships with BPI members. The business offering has been revamped to exclusively focus on sourcing and distribution of medical, IT, office, paper, hospitality, and food services goods. Beautiful Brains has hired four community members over the last 10 months. While they feel they have built the trust of local purchasing organizations, Beautiful Brains is now working through the challenge of sustaining the relationships, and getting long-term commitment to purchase (e.g., via contracts), which is often in conflict with longstanding contracts purchasers have with large, national distributors.

Madiba Janitorial is a small custodial company focused on creating jobs for refugees and immigrants. Thanks to a contract with Wegmans, Madiba’s largest client to-

date, the company is growing in experience, staff, and capital due to the “stepped-up” opportunities they are being provided. Madiba started with one small location to demonstrate their capacity and to provide on-the-job training for their staff, and now works in a second and larger Wegmans location. Wegmans has provided financial support for equipment purchases, as well as mentorship in the face of challenges along the way. While Madiba’s owner has admitted to the challenges of the current labor shortage making it difficult to keep night-shift workers on board and still make a profit, as well as other requirements of working with a large company (e.g. background checks/drug testing), he reports that the business is benefitting from the trust and support provided by Wegmans that has allowed him to staff up, train employees, make capital investments and to build and demonstrate their capacity to other potential clients.

Challenges and Opportunities

Providing wraparound support for suppliers

After two years, the SBDC partnership has begun to demonstrate a healthy model for partnering with BSOs. The BPI and SBDC have developed a rhythm of introducing new businesses to one another, bringing those businesses in front of the BPI membership, jointly coaching them for their BPI pitches, and supporting them when they work with a BPI member organization. The benefits of this collaboration were brought to light with one vendor this year that was facing challenges with a new contract where both BPI and SBDC, together, were able to bring together the details SBDC knew about the supplier and the assistance they needed, and the feedback BPI was getting from a member on where they needed to see improvement, to help to “troubleshoot” and provide tactical solutions. As a result, this vendor continues to work with, and grow their work with the BPI member.

The pipeline of available suppliers

While in 2021 there were some successes with BSO-referred suppliers, the capacity gap between businesses that work with BPI members and BSO clients remains a challenge. Most of the businesses working within the BSO ecosystem are early-stage businesses and will continue to be due to the mission the BSOs have to serve the community. Most businesses that BPI meets through its BSO collaborators are either too small or inexperienced to compete for work with BPI members, or their goods and service offerings are not aligned with the needs of BPI members. BPI continues to share identified areas of high demand to help close the “supply gap,” which BSO partners have used to influence their own grantmaking and technical assistance.

4. Purchasing Council Engagement

Purchasing Council (PC) Meetings

PC activities continued virtually due to COVID-19 in all of 2021, but the group continued to meet monthly, and attendance continued to be high (an average of 12 attendees per meeting). Three of those meetings focused on communicating for racial equity through workshops led by Just Partners. To ensure that online meetings allowed for effective and open communication, all events remained small, with usually no more than 20 people attending. In 2021, BPI also engaged the PCI in:

- *BPI Supplier Pitches: BPI hosted 13, 30-minute online pitches by suppliers from transportation, goods sourcing, and distribution, groundskeeping, construction/trades, IT, security, uniforms and 5 vendors from marketing/communications/creative services (as this has been identified as a high BPI opportunity area). 125 people attended, 54 of which were non-PC members.*
- *How to Work with Us Sessions: Four BPI members took part in SBDC procurement-focused training sessions by presenting on their organization's procurement processes and potential opportunities pipeline. They introduced their organizations to over 40 new suppliers through these courses.*
- *Narrative Change Workshop: PC members took part in a workshop, with members of the BLTF, led by The Case Made for an introduction to strategies for making the case for change.*

PC Feedback/Evaluation of BPI

In January 2022, the BPI Program Director re-distributed the BPI Evaluation survey first taken by the group in 2020. Fifteen people responded (three anonymously) representing 11 BPI member organizations. The following summarizes the results of this evaluation:

Awareness and access to businesses

All respondents felt that BPI has helped increase awareness of businesses owned by people of color and has helped to facilitate meaningful connections with them. Seventy-three percent felt satisfied that BPI could help to address organizational/procedural barriers to working with more businesses owned by people of color. Two-thirds were satisfied with BPI's ability to address gaps in the local businesses of color available to meet service/good needs of their organizations.

Impact on PC members' work: 80% of members feel that BPI has had a positive impact on their work (down from 91% in 2020). Most PC members and their teams have learned more about the challenges facing businesses owned by people of color, and all felt that BPI has increased their team's awareness of businesses owned by people of color. 13% of respondents feel that trying to achieve BPI goals has made their work harder (down from 27% in 2020). Only 47% feel they are/will be recognized and rewarded for their work on BPI (down from 64% in 2020).

Policy and procedural change

While 60% of PC members feel they have identified specific policies/procedures that are barriers to businesses owned by people of color (up from 45% in 2020), only 40% have made/informed changes to remove those barriers.

Support for BPI across the organization

Overall, PC members feel they have the buy-in from their teams to carry out this work. Two-thirds of respondents felt that colleagues outside of their team are aware of involvement in BPI and that organizational leadership promotes inclusive procurement work. But only 40% felt it has been easy to engage colleagues outside of their direct team in BPI efforts (down from 64% in 2020). Four out of 15 respondents felt BPI goals come in direct conflict with other initiatives at the organization.

BPI tools and infrastructure

Fourteen out of 15 respondents felt that PC meetings are a safe and trusted space for discussing work and challenges. Sixty-six percent felt the new AXI supplier portal helped them to find business owned by people of color, and 7/15 found it helped their team. Eighty percent of respondents felt the 6-month and 12-month spend reviews and reports help to track progress towards BPI goals.

2021 Goals and Actions for the PC

In addition to spend targets, PC members created goals in the following areas. Progress on these goals is included in each member's year-end assessment.

Formalize one policy or procedural change

For many members, the procedural change implemented was training teams of buyers to use the BPI online supplier portal and setting the expectation that it be searched for vendors for whatever procurement opportunity they are working on. This is important for changing and institutionalizing new practices. In 2021, one PC member did create a new policy to dictate and quantify the inclusion of businesses owned by people of color in the bidding process (i.e., one of every three bids sought must be from a business of color).

Apply racial equity impact analysis framework

Most PC members achieved this goal by participating in three BPI racial equity communications workshops (led by Just Partners) and used the sessions as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Impact Analysis tool to procurement communications and documents (e.g., RFP cover letter).

Improve supplier inclusion/diversity communications

Most goals and actions in this area were general, including BPI presentations or refreshers to remind staff of inclusive procurement goals and resources. In two instances, member communication efforts were more formal – the creation of a video telling the story of vendor partners and writing an article for an internal newsletter reporting their BPI goals and progress.

Increase internal engagement: Each member had a different engagement goal, depending on the nature of “buy-in” they sought for this work. Many members targeted outreach to departments outside of procurement that control their own spend (e.g., construction, HR). In three instances, PC members fulfilled this goal by initiating a relationship with the DEI officer to create a strategy for collaboration.

2021 “Best of BPI”

This year BPI recognizes the work the following organizations and PC members are doing to make supplier inclusion and diversity sustainable at their organizations:

Best Overall Performance

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center for increased spending with businesses owned by people of color three-fold in 2021, surpassing their goal and achieving the highest weighted score in the membership through outreach, bringing on new suppliers across multiple sectors, and retaining and increasing spend with existing suppliers.

Extraordinary Outreach and Supplier Support

ECMC for, in addition to surpassing the spending goal by 44%, used a variety of platforms for conducting outreach to businesses owned by people of color (especially with BPI-connected vendors), meeting those businesses, and providing them with resources (e.g., MWBE certification workshops), and connecting them to opportunities, even outside of direct purchasing efforts (e.g., employee vendor fair).

Supplier Sustainability

Kaleida and Wegmans for working closely with individual businesses to find opportunities, continue to expand those opportunities and mentor them through the process and challenges of growing alongside the organization.

BPI Engagement

M&T Bank for most leveraging of BPI tools, events and infrastructure including supplier directory usage, outreach to BPI connected suppliers, attendance and sharing experiences and best practices at pitches and BPI meetings, in addition to making major advances with M&T’s Supplier Diversity program and policy development.

Challenges and Opportunities

Limited control over spending

PC members have alluded to a limited or exhausted ability to influence procurement decisions. This results from the need for more buy-in from decision makers across the organizations (business units outside of procurement), a consistent challenge since the launch of BPI. Some commented that leadership and broader buy-in is needed for additional policy or system change. In particular, a few members suggested that business unit leaders must have their own inclusion targets for organizational success. This sentiment is compounded by external circumstances such as COVID, budget cuts, supply chain disruptions, and the reliance on large national/international service providers or distributors (e.g., Cardinal Health, W.B. Mason, Allied Universal Security Services) that provide efficiencies that they feel their organization will not be able to move away from. Support from high-level leadership is seen as critical to being able to overcome these challenges and change related practices. The 2022 retreat will provide opportunity for PC members to, as a group, engage in a process of stakeholder mapping that will help them to create a detailed strategy for how to engage decision makers that can help to address these issues.

External transparency: To date, 10/14 BPI organizations have conducted at least one “How to Work with Us” session, and for many of them, this was the first of such type of public presentation. But for a range of reasons (e.g., unavailability, feeling unprepared or not ready to be public facing), only 4 organizations participated in 2021 and 2020, respectively. The group initially set a goal of each conducting one presentation per year, as this was determined to be an important part of making the organization accessible and visible to suppliers. BPI will continue to create opportunities for BPI members to present and help those members to prepare for the presentations. The launch of the BPI website in 2022 will also lend to more transparency on the procurement process and opportunity areas with BPI members.

A reluctance to collaborate

Members of the BPI are currently moving in the same direction to make “coordinated impact” but not yet collaborating in a way that the group has “collective impact”. Some PC members attribute this to competition and the need for confidentiality, and some public members state that public procurement processes keep them from working together to steer procurement efforts in favor of BPI goals. Other members can’t envision how to collaborate. The PC will address this issue together in the 2022 March retreat (e.g., where are possible opportunities to collaborate?) and explore tactics for solving this, and other BPI challenges. If “collective impact” is indeed a goal of BPI, this discussion may have to take place at the BLTF/Executive Committee level to give PC members the assurances they need to work together.

5. BPI Strength and Sustainability

Growing the membership

BPI brought on two new members in 2021 (Independent Health and Highmark Health) that have fully participated in BPI events and activities but are still in the “onboarding” phase. Their spending and goals will be reflected in 2022 analyses.

Supplier Portal/Database

In 2021, BPI shifted to AXI System Inc. to host and manage the BPI supplier portal. The level of technical support, data management/cleaning and customer service, including the regular refresh of supplier data from local state and national business data sources, is far superior to that of the prior provider (Coupa/ConnXus). This has relieved BPI and U3 level of a lot of time and energy previously spent on the portal. The BPI portal currently includes 550 suppliers owned by people of color. There are 113 BPI users representing all BPI member organizations, of which 25% have logged into the portal more than once. 88 of the users are non-PC members, demonstrating the ability of the portal to help engage a broader cohort of staff in the work.

Knowledge Sharing

In line with the one of the 2021 BPI priorities, BPI began presenting the model publicly at the following venues:

- *BNP D&I Symposium, June 8 – “P is for Procurement” featuring Errol Douglas (Roswell), Michael Driscoll (Rich Products), Shea O’Neill (U3)*
- *WNY Sustainable Business Round Table Responsible Sourcing panel, November 18 - with Green Health Exchange, NYS Green Purchasing Initiative, and the Erie County Food Policy Council*
- *Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities Promising Practice session November 11 with Shea O’Neill (U3), Linda Deni (UB) and Sue McCartney (Buffalo State SBDC)*

Response to the presentations was positive, and BPI aims to participate in more, similar events in 2022. Now that the program has moved beyond the pilot stage and that the results of 2021 have been analyzed, and several lessons have been learned and case studies developed, BPI is now better prepared to package and share the information through a publication in 2022.

Website

BPI will be part of the revamp of the Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) website. The BPI portion of the website, due to be launched in Q3 of 2022, will serve as the public face of the initiative for local businesses/vendors looking for opportunities with institutions and corporations in the region, and for other purchasing institutions or entities interested in learning about BPI. BPI members are currently working - with the help of communications colleagues - on content to represent their own organizations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Online Supplier Portal/Database

While over 100 people have signed up, portal usage is disproportionate across the membership. Some users have demonstrated a preference for continued use of the hard copy/Microsoft Excel format of the portal, and other PC members have revealed that they prefer to be manager of the portal for their organization and share information with other staff/business groups as requested, rather than allowing other colleagues to “self-serve” from the portal directly. Use of the portal is an important and practical way to influence changes in practice, and BPI will continue to do portal trainings and work with PC members to leverage trainings to engage staff from across their organizations.

2019-2022 Progress, Results of the Pilot

Over the past three years of the pilot program, BPI saw a positive trajectory in spending and business transactions with local businesses owned by people of color. We saw a \$42M net increase in spending from the program baseline by BPI members, which represents over a 101% increase in average annual spending with such businesses. There was a net increase of 287 business relationships (e.g. contracts) from baseline, with BPI members working with 3x as many businesses owned by people of color as they were before the program pilot. While Tier II (indirect) spending is not a primary metric for BPI—as our goal is to increase prime spending with local businesses—we saw a \$4M net increase over the course of the pilot from only three members that were able to provide this data. BPI also added 2 organizations to grow its membership to 14 during this time.

2021 Spending and Outreach Updates

In 2021 BPI members spent \$17.4M with businesses owned by people of color, a decrease from the previous year (which was tied directly to capital project fluctuations and a decrease in PPE spending) but saw continued substantial increase in the development of supplier relationships and all leading indicators thanks to increased exposure to vendors, outreach, and invitations to businesses owned by people of color to participate in procurement opportunities. There was a significant increase in spend (from 25-500%) in targeted categories (custodial, staffing, security, food / catering, marketing / creative). 130 unique supplier/member relationships were created, representing work with 93 individual businesses. Outreach to businesses also increased significantly with 157 individual connections made with businesses, followed by 83 unique invitations to participate in procurement opportunities.

Business Impacts

BPI matchmaking activities also bore fruit in 2021 where 13 business pitches to BPI members resulted in 10 matches and \$1.66M in spending. BPI also saw success through its business service organization (BSO) partnerships. For example, of the 8 clients referred by the Small Business Development Center who pitched to BPI members, 4 successfully won work. BPI conducted three case studies to gauge Individual business growth and found that impacts varied across businesses and

sectors. Businesses owners reported that by working with BPI members they all saw direct revenue growth, some expanded to create jobs that were filled locally, others made capital (equipment) investments, and one shifted her business model to respond to the local need for goods sourcing and distribution, especially medical / PPE.

Connection to other GBRER Efforts

In 2021, BPI partnered with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership (BNP) to inform the creation of their new Minority Business Initiative. BPI helped to frame the initiative based on local business needs and made referrals for the first cohort of businesses owned by people of color to take part. 5 businesses benefited from a BNP membership, promotion of their businesses and other capacity building supports.

2022 BPI Priorities

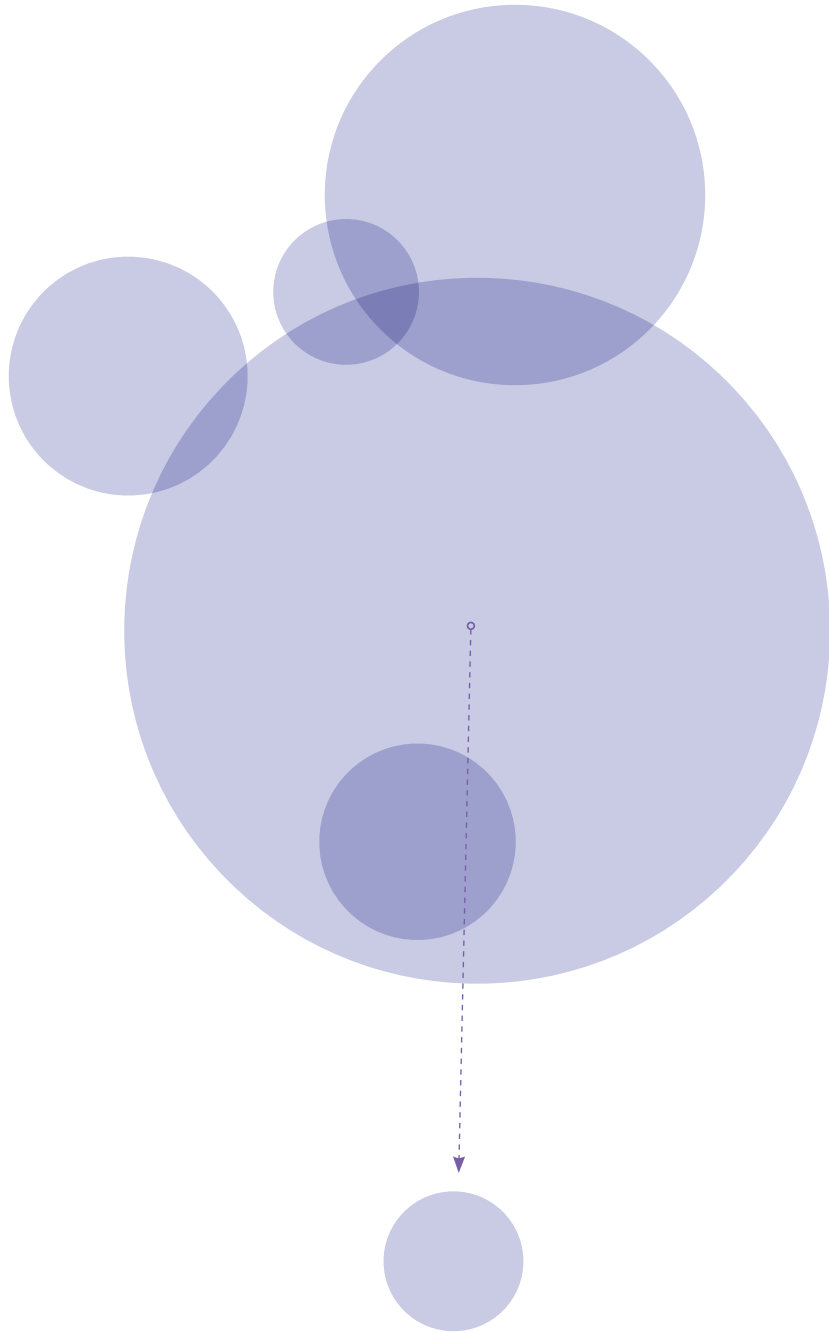
In 2022, BPI aims to sustain the work by increasing frequency of use of the online supplier portal across the membership and broadening access to the portal through training and BPI presentations to business units outside of Procurement. BPI will continue supplier outreach with focus on key BPI sectors and continue hosting regular supplier pitches to drive PC outreach and engagement with suppliers. BPI will launch a new website in 2022 (as part of the GBRER website revamp) and will use the website and member “How to Work with Us” sessions to increase transparency and better provide suppliers with resources and information about BPI members and procurement opportunities.

1. BPI sustainability

- *Continue onboarding of the new BPI members before seeking new members to join*
- *Increase frequency of use of the online supplier portal across the membership, and broaden access to the portal through trainings and BPI presentations to business units outside of Procurement*
- *Deepen learnings with presentations/trainings with subject matter experts*

2. Increase supplier outreach and engagement

- *Continue supplier outreach with focus on key BPI sectors, and continue hosting regular supplier pitches to drive PC outreach and engagement with suppliers*
- *Use the website and “How to Work with Us” sessions to better provide suppliers with resources and information about BPI members and procurement opportunities*





**Greater Buffalo
Racial Equity
Roundtable Reentry
Coalition (RC)**

Background

The Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable Reentry Coalition (RC) grew out of an initial meeting between the Erie County administration and four reentry organizations. These parties shared an agenda of strengthening the reentry system for individuals transitioning out of the justice system. The RC initially included 43 reentry policy-making institutions and organizations and has now expanded to include about 85 individual members. Efforts of RC members have been dedicated to providing needed services throughout the pandemic, expanding existing reentry programs, and measuring the impacts of RC initiatives on the community.

The RC held its first planning meeting in 2016, with support from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, which provided facilitators from the U.S. National Reentry Resource Center. It's first accomplishment was a new plan for Erie County's reentry system. This plan prioritized five goals. The top priority was establishing a one-stop hub with services tailored to formerly incarcerated individuals, the Service Link Stop (SLS). The successful opening in November 2020 and operation of the SLS has strengthened reentry services in the community by providing a central access point to formerly incarcerated individuals. While support of the SLS continues to be a main focus of the RC, the Coalition has also provided resources like knowledge of funding opportunities, new partnerships, and support from the Community Foundation to promote RC success.

The New Dawn Initiative also has shown its accomplishment in its goals to provide universal screening for mental illness and substance use and case management, up to one year post-release, to the jail population. Project Blue, a nationally recognized comprehensive pre and post release reentry program, is designed to prepare individuals to reenter the community by providing case management, employment preparedness assistance, and empowerment sessions. Upon reentry, Project Blue participants also receive housing coordination, medical linkage assistance, court advocacy, workforce and education resources, and case management.

Summary of Findings

Current RC initiatives include the SLS, the New Dawn Initiative, Project Blue, and the Erie County Reentry Task Force. The RC continues to function with the support of the Community Foundation, serving as a collaborative network of reentry-focused organizations and programs. The cooperation of the 85 RC members has expanded local reentry impact not only through work on these initiatives, but also through the sharing of knowledge, resources, and partnerships among members' respective organizations and social networks.

Despite challenges to member engagement presented by the ongoing need for virtual meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts of the RC leadership and the Community Foundation to ensure successful decision-making processes have resulted in continued progress in RC initiatives, as demonstrated by the continued funding of the Project Blue and New Dawn Initiative programs, the coordination of new partnerships between organizations and the SLS, and the ongoing development of the virtual hub. The Coalition formed a steering committee designed to streamline the decision making process of the RC with input of coalition members and organization leaders. Collaboration between members has been integral in the RC's operations, with joint efforts between organizations resulting in projects such as the SLS and a new virtual hub for reentry services. Due to opportunities for RC members to interact and articulate their shared goals and values, new partnerships such as Legal Aid's collaboration with Project Blue, continue to be generated among the group and its newcomers.

Methods

The goals of the evaluation were to assess RC initiative processes and impacts along with member experiences. Data included quarterly meeting observations, an annual evaluation survey, and qualitative interviews with three RC members. Observations of quarterly meetings focused on member interactions, implementation of reentry initiatives, progress on data collection for the outcome evaluations of these initiatives, and decision-making processes.

The annual RC Evaluation Survey was administered for the third consecutive year (see Appendix C for survey questions). In this reporting period, the annual survey included questions about members' perceptions of the RC's internal processes and collaboration and its impact on the reentry populations. The survey was administered online via SurveyMonkey between February 6th and February 20th to 85 participants, 15 of whom responded, resulting in an 18% response rate.

Individual, semi-structured qualitative interviews with three RC participants occurred on the 23rd and 24th of March 2022 and were conducted via Zoom (see Appendix E for interview guide). Interview lengths ranged from 35 to 80 minutes

and followed a semi-structured interview guide that included questions about engagement, communication, leadership, collaboration, impact, and shared vision. Interviewees possessed varying roles within the Coalition and came from diverse professional backgrounds, providing different perspectives on dynamics within the RC.

RC's operations, with joint efforts between organizations resulting in projects such as the SLS and a new virtual hub for reentry services. Due to opportunities for RC members to interact and articulate their shared goals and values, new partnerships such as Legal Aid's collaboration with Project Blue, continue to be generated among the group and its newcomers.

Collaboration between members

The RC has been successful in its goal of increasing connections and collaboration within the re-entry sector. Thirteen out of the 15 survey respondents reported an increase in reentry knowledge because of their involvement in the RC. In addition to the increasing knowledge, members of the RC have reported participation in reentry work or service activities: 13 out of 15 survey takers expressed working on improving outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals outside of their time with the RC. Many of the efforts reported by participants center around raising awareness of reentry resources among their professional and personal social networks (10/15) and active participation in activities outside of quarterly meetings (13/15). Regarding the change that the RC has catalyzed on a personal level, an interviewee stated:

"I mean, it's really put me in touch with a lot of people that are interested in doing the same work and made a lot of friends and a lot of new partners and it's kind of like re-energized my career, if you will."

Regarding the impact that the RC has on an organizational level, another interviewee stated:

"[Without the RC] I don't think [my organization] would have any focus necessarily on reentry services. I think they would be part of all of everything that we refer people to, but not necessarily something that we would, say, highlight to staff in training."

Throughout this reporting period, participants indicated that partnerships and collaborations associated with the SLS increased despite the ongoing presence of the pandemic.

Success of the Service Link Stop

The SLS continues to be operational and a hub for reentry efforts within the Buffalo community. Regarding the services available within the SLS, one interviewee stated:

"I would say the Service Link Stop is a great [...] Community health center, Department of Mental Health, Back to Basics Ministries, Best Health Behavioral Services, [they] all stem from the former mental health director in the jail presenting it and bringing it to the Reentry Coalition and developing that model."

It was perceived, at least by some, that the SLS was doing re-entry support differently, with an eye toward systems change. They are trying to make the system more integrated and more responsive to the needs of re-entering individuals. One interviewee reflected on the effects that the RC has had on a systems level and the expected outcomes based on their upcoming plans:

"[The RC leadership asks] 'what's your barrier? What can we do? How can we address this higher up and really enforce that change and then sustainable change'? [...] I think from my level of working with them and being involved with the SLS and the Coalition, that they're doing everything they can in the realm that we're in to address that systemic barrier."

Efforts to establish new partnerships are also underway. Members of the RC noted the need for an expansion of resources that can supplement existing services, such as mental health support, grief counseling, and job seeking assistance, with a focus on individuals with fewer needs identified upon reentering the community. formerly incarcerated individuals with a higher number of needs who have utilized available reentry resources are more likely to have their needs met. Discussions on how initiatives that participate in the RC can lend support to formerly incarcerated individuals with fewer needs were highlighted by an interviewee:

"There [is] so much support for people who have these really high needs. But what about these people who only have one or two needs? And [we're] really focusing on that. We have a meeting at the end of the month [...] the hope is that we can really talk about these other things that somebody coming out might need and how we can support them aside from forensics and really the focus on mental health."

Since the establishment of the SLS, the RC is expanding service delivery to include a virtual hub that will serve as a central location for anyone looking for reentry resources and for agencies and providers to stay updated on what is available in the community. The information will be delivered alongside narratives about re-entering individuals' experiences with the services. The virtual hub will serve as an extension of the SLS, providing information on services, testimonials, and guides

to the community for formerly incarcerated individuals, their families, and their providers. Successful implementation of the hub will increase the reach of reentry resources by utilizing online platforms. Regarding the functionality of the planned virtual hub, an interviewee said:

“The hub is going to be not only a hub of resources for a person that is reentering, but also for providers to know what’s going on, like organization leaders and providers, as well as family members or people interested in supporting to know what’s available in the community.”

The reentry hub will have information on available employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, resources centered around reentry that exist within and outside of the SLS, and testimonials from people who have participated in reentry programs. The content that can be accessed in the virtual hub will be centered around any programs and services, including but not limited to the SLS, that can benefit individuals, their families, and providers seeking to know more about reentry in the community. The virtual hub development is underway, and it is expected to begin operations within the 2022 calendar year.

The majority of RC survey respondents agreed that the SLS was having a significant impact. However, the impact of initiatives such as the SLS might be greater if the larger community were more aware of its services. One interviewee said that it could be promoted more widely:

“I think [the RC] could benefit from some increased awareness in the community. I don’t know that necessarily other providers know that it exists, the work that they’re doing, and I don’t know that other political leaders and certainly community members necessarily know about it. And I think there’s some opportunities there to share the good work, but also get input from the community about maybe where it should go next, or support and participation.”

RC decision making structure and support from the Community Foundation

Upon inquiry, interviewees did not report any major changes in the decision-making process of the RC. Due to the large number of RC members and current efforts to increase the number of partners working to improve reentry resources in Buffalo, the RC relies on a steering committee, a smaller coordinating committee to steer the decision-making process on behalf of the larger body. An interviewee described the current operations of the steering committee:

“So we do have a coordinating committee that it doesn’t meet very often, but that really is like the group that steers the ship, if you will. So that’s again, a smaller subset. I think there’s about 15 people that serve on the coordinating committee. So [participation in the steering committee from RC members] is not equal per se, but everybody has a voice.”

Quarterly meetings continue to function as a source of updates on existing and upcoming RC initiatives for members. Quarterly meeting agendas are developed by the co-chairs and the consultant with support from the Community Foundation and center around initiatives supported by the RC, where members participate in discussions on updates and plans for the RC.

Community Foundation support to the RC is perceived as critical to its ongoing momentum. One interviewee described an example of how the Community Foundation is an active participant in the development of the SLS:

“So they’re invested in work that we’re doing and being able to do whatever they can to help with the service that we’re providing [...] So I think it was nice for [SLS staff and partners] to see that type of engagement from these, essentially higher-ups at such an early stage in their development [of the project].”

An interviewee provided another example of the Community Foundation’s role in the support of RC initiatives:

“The New Dawn Initiative, which [...] is in its second year of operation, was obtained as part of a federal second chance act grant that was applied for in conjunction with the Community Foundation.”

Virtual meetings impact member interaction

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact participation of the RC because meetings continue to be held over Zoom. Online meetings impact direct engagement of participants by limiting in-person networking opportunities and reducing attention to the content discussed due to work-related distractions. One interviewee described limitations related to meeting virtually:

“I think that it’s tough to quantify because our meetings have been virtual. I think all of us have gotten very accustomed [...] to checking emails, working on something else if you’re not required to be directly engaged in what’s going on. I think overall, the level of engagement in the work of the Coalition remains very high and very active, but I do think we’re somewhat limited by the continued use of virtual platforms to conduct the meetings.”

Another member stated that it was difficult to stage informal interactions, an important part of building new partnerships, when using online meeting platforms:

“One thing we lost from the in person meetings is you’re not having those face to face interactions with people during a break right after the meeting. So it’s pretty much all email, obviously the email beyond the scope of the meetings [...] I think it’s tough to build relationships when you’re not face to face, when you’re not like having a cup of coffee, just having an informal conversation. [...] I absolutely believe [that informal conversations] can lead to new partnerships.”

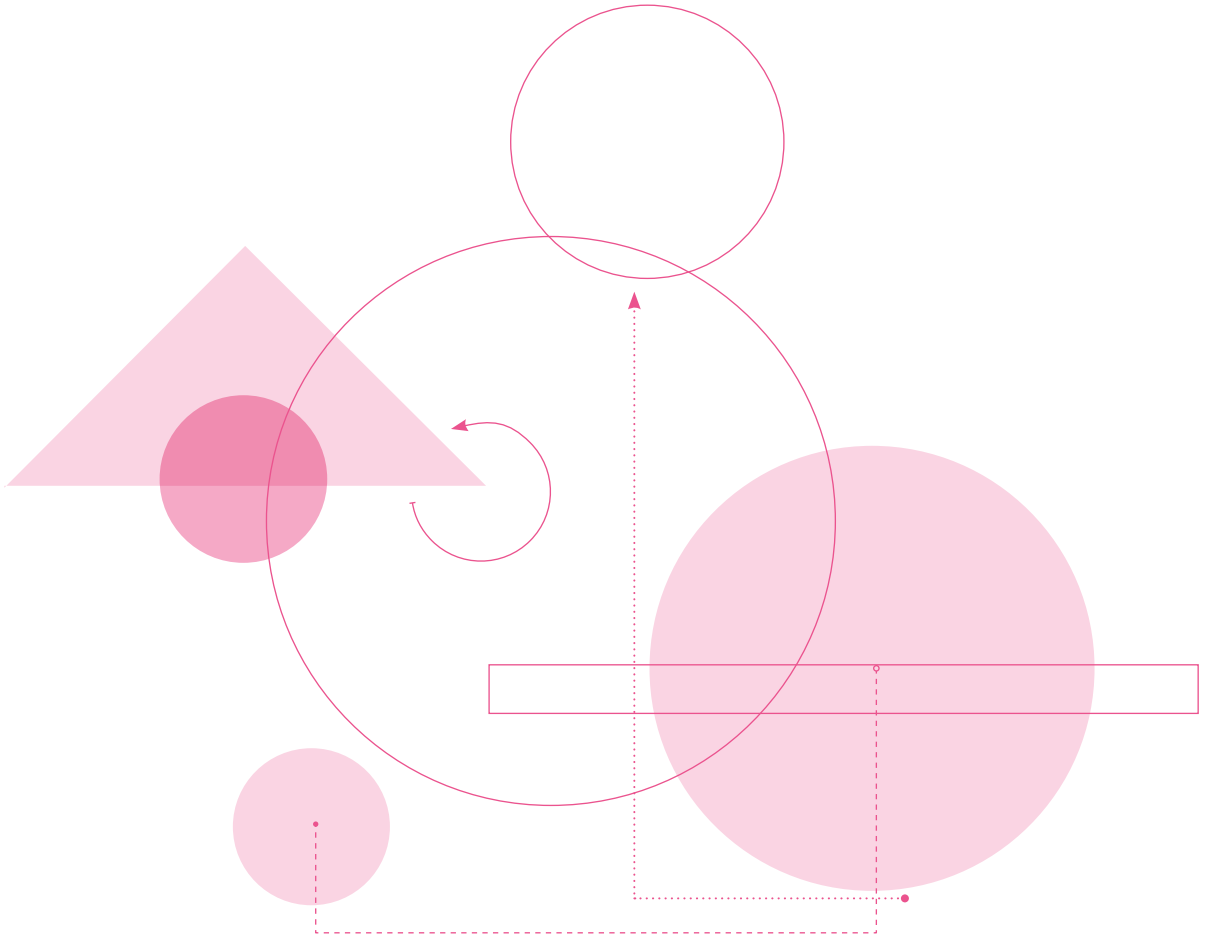
Moving forward

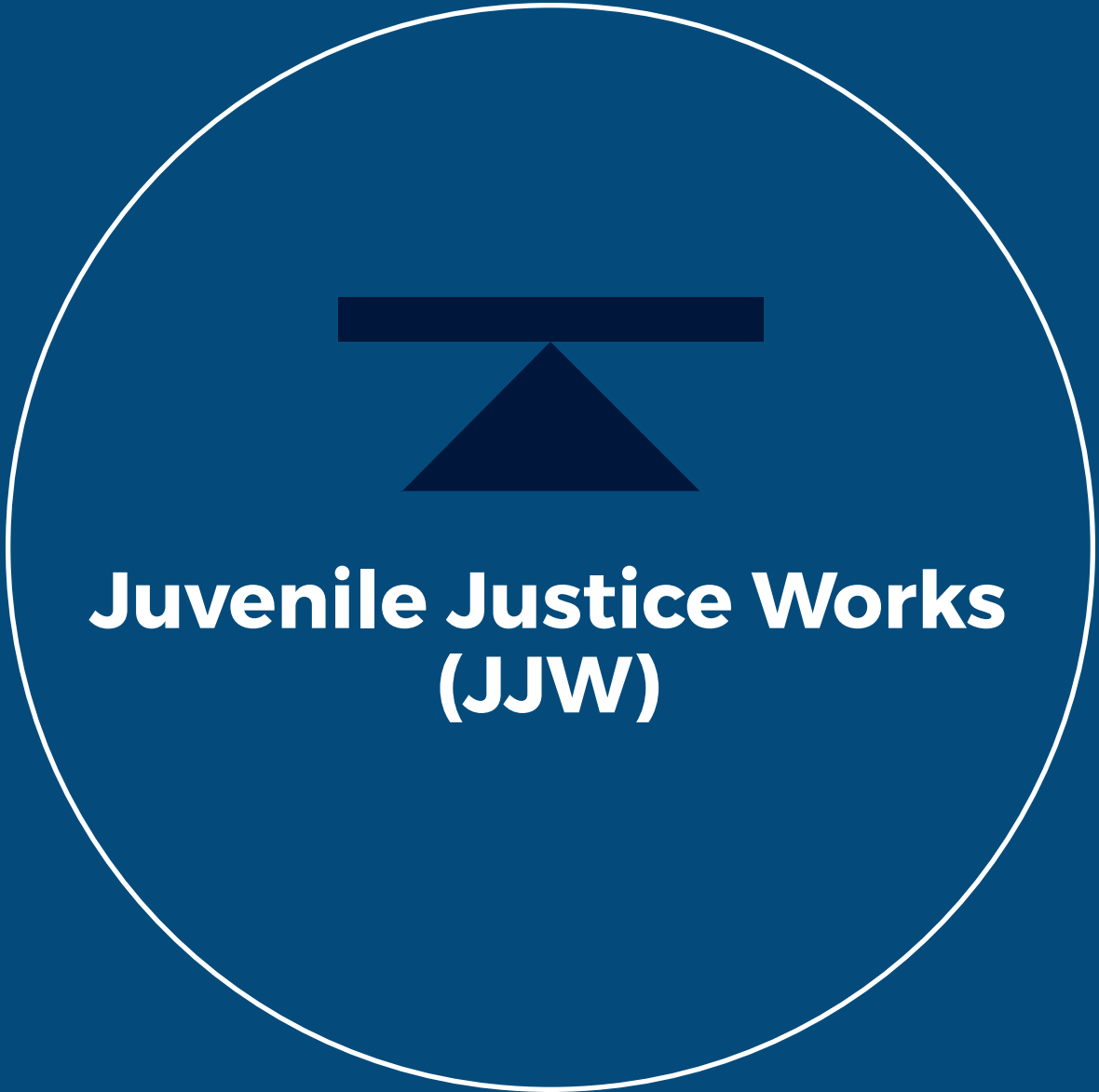
To best assess the RC’s impact on its intended population and the Buffalo community, the SLS’s data collection procedures need to provide outputs that measure the effectiveness of programming and identify areas of improvement. Anecdotally, survey participants reported a need for increased reentry services aimed to improve housing opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals and other resources aimed to assist with meeting basic needs and improving quality of life. With the successful implementation of the existing initiatives, sustained efforts to evaluate their impact will need to occur to identify if these suggestions are in-line with needs reported by the reentering population.



RC Recommendations

- 1** Increase communication among members of the RC and with the community to increase awareness of reentry services available provided by existing initiatives like the SLS, Project Blue, and New Dawn Initiative, as well as upcoming initiatives.
- 2** Finalize the planning and creation of an online hub that will serve as a resource of reentry information and services for RC members and the community.
- 3** Access data to identify strengths and improvement areas across all initiatives to develop shared measures to design quality improvement recommendations based on findings.





Background

Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) was initiated in 2018 with support from the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) and Community Foundation to reduce contact between youth and the juvenile justice system and to improve the outcomes of youth interfacing with juvenile justice systems. The group currently consists of 52 members ranging from non-profit and county government staff to judges and local politicians. To best inform how to move forward, the Community Foundation facilitated a review of the region's juvenile justice practices when the group started. He formulated the following recommendations in the Erie County Juvenile Justice Race Equity Report:

- 1. Establish a coalition of key stakeholders*
- 2. Deepen understanding of racial equity among stakeholders*
- 3. Develop capacity for regular analysis of disaggregated data at every system decision point*
- 4. Identify and incorporate best practices*
- 5. Fully engage communities of color as partners*

Beginning in 2019, the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) was contracted to facilitate the group's meetings and progress while incorporating best practices in eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice systems from their work with communities nationally. Their work in building group capacity, structuring collaborative effort toward reaching common coalition goals, and guidance as to continuation of coalition growth was concluded in 2021. The group continues to be led by Lt. David Mann (Lieutenant, Buffalo Police Department Special Victims Unit), Danielle D'Abate (Chief, Community Prosecution Bureau, Erie County District Attorney's Office), Dina Thompson (Executive Director, Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition), Dr. Tonja Williams (Superintendent of Buffalo Public Schools), and Aimee Neri (NYS Child Welfare Court Improvement Project Liaison), while subcommittees across the JJW are led by various members with expertise in those respective areas. Group expansion in terms of membership and scope of work is continuous.

Summary of Findings

Overall, JJW members demonstrated sustained engagement, motivation, and commitment to making change. Many members agreed that this year was marked by group unification, trusted leadership, and initial impact on many facets of community work associated with the whole of the juvenile justice system. While members are unified in their overall efforts to achieve coalition objectives, the need for greater cohesion among working groups, and an understanding among all members of the advancements that they are each making, has emerged. Additionally, the JJW continues to solidify its goals, logistical support from the Community Foundation remains important for maintaining forward momentum.

Methods

Observations of all JJW meetings, including working group meetings were conducted. These observations focused on the group's communication, leadership and structure, growth and development, logistics, dynamics and adherence to its objectives and goals. Trends in attendance, turnover, and expansion were also noted. Information gathered from regular JJW meeting observations were analyzed in conjunction with interview data in order to synthesize the qualitative data and identify overarching themes.

For the third consecutive year, JJW members also completed an annual evaluation survey assessing perceptions of trust, collaboration, and engagement. (See Appendix for survey questions and mean responses.) The survey was administered online via Survey Monkey during the month of February 2022. The final survey sample included responses from 12 out of 52 members.

Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three members of the JJW. The interviews were conducted voluntarily and remotely via Zoom at the convenience of each participant using the interview guide included in Appendix D. The de-identified interview data, in combination with the observations and survey data, allowed for synthesis of overall themes relating to the group's challenges and successes during this evaluation period.

Unified Commitment to JJW Goals

Interviewees agreed that one of the most valuable assets of the JJW Coalition and its members continues to be a cohesive, unified commitment to the Coalition's mission. Members have remained steadfastly dedicated and collaborative in their ability to work toward established goals. Implementation of group action steps based on intensive planning has occurred more strongly this year, and many attribute the group's success coming to fruition to this dynamic that has been strengthened over time. One interviewee described the dynamic as being both an established feature

of the group and a benefit that members have leveraged successfully:

“I think that in the quarterly meetings, I always enter those spaces feeling comfortable and happy knowing that we’re having like-minded discussions, even if we come from different perspectives. There’s still always a cohesiveness about those conversations and those relationships.”

Members also indicated that the relationship-building process within the group has been the basis for valuable outcomes for JJW:

“Relationships, first and foremost with Felicia [Beard], have been important. We have all developed a shared commitment to this project and it connects and reconnects us. What happens from this is that we have personal or professional needs and all we have to do is send an email to her or send it to a group member and to me we’ve made an impression on each other. We’re walking away with these relationships and it truly affects the work I do every day. It’s that deep.”

JJW membership has continued to lead to new perspectives and collaborative efforts in members’ work, the work of their colleagues, and the impact that has been had on members’ places of work and the community at large. One member observed:

“Relationships [have been] formed with the young people from the Breaking Barriers group, with youth giving some feedback about relationships with police officers...away from the table, there have been smaller collaborations, maybe with mentoring and calling people in for mentoring to be more involved in this conversation. Out of the Center for Resolution and Justice, Judge Friedman, who is also at this table, has now started doing a three-part series in her court, so that has come out of these relationships and connections.”

In addition, membership has allowed for group members to build stronger community understanding and knowledge of the juvenile justice system as a larger, community-embedded structure with multifaceted implications for many professionals across Buffalo and beyond. One member affirmed this and shared:

“Often if youth are entering the juvenile justice system, there may have been things going on that just didn’t get identified earlier in the child welfare system. I think that in those ways, [coalition work] helps just inform the juvenile justice work around what might be happening at the child welfare level, particularly around race equity that historically has impacted how then youth continue on into the juvenile justice system, and to really be thinking about it holistically from a whole-family perspective instead of just a youth perspective. A lot of the work I do outside of this work group is in technical assistance and facilitation, so this is helpful and it makes us think about how the work we do in these roles [outside of the JJW] is effective and sustainable.”

Success of Group Expansion

Over the past year, the JJW has expanded four work groups that were established across 2020 and 2021 to fortify and supplement the work of the larger JJW Coalition. These work groups resulted from information-gathering led by previous work of the BI, and came about after robust and comprehensive collaborative discussion resulting in the group agreeing that work groups would be beneficial in moving forward its overall aims. The work groups include:

- *BPS Code of Conduct and Restorative Practices Work Group*
- *Training and Development Work Group*
- *Community Policing/ Neighborhood Engagement Team (NET) + Diversion Work Group*
- *Probation Work Group*

The objectives of the BPS Code of Conduct and Restorative Practices work group are:

1. *To develop a restorative justice program in schools that reduces the highest long- and short-term suspensions*
2. *To update the BPS Code of Conduct in partnership with Buffalo Public Schools (BPS)*

The objectives of the Community Policing/NET + Diversion work group are:

1. *To strengthen community policing practices in partnership with the Neighborhood Engagement Team (NET), initiated by the creation of a survey of NET to determine impact*
2. *To develop pre- and post-arrest diversion programming in the Buffalo-area zip codes containing the highest number of arrests for African American youth.*

The Training and Development work group's objectives are:

1. *To expand racial equity training for all key JJW stakeholders per the Coalition's overall training plan*

Finally, the Probation work group's goal is:

1. *To develop policy and practice changes that reduce the number of technical probation violations for African American youth.*

While each group has moved at a different pace throughout the year in terms of formulating objectives and community recommendations, all groups have established unique dynamics and rapport to the extent that progress has been observed across all the groups. All groups made notable strides toward achieving their objectives (in whole or in part) under the auspices of CFGB's leadership. Communication, which is generally open and collaborative in the larger JJW, has similarly been established inside each of the groups, and their own unique dynamics were arguably born of the larger group structure. This has been the basis upon which strong relationships have been formed and leveraged to move group work forward.

Per observations of each group, members tended to tap into personal and professional networks and social resources to advance their working groups' accomplishments. Members were enthusiastic to take more action steps toward meeting group objectives, and responded well to the uniform leadership structure/methods carried over by the BI. In work group settings, members have had more difficult and challenging conversations than are often had in the larger group setting, with concerns and feedback more frequently and openly discussed and hashed out. While some group members have indicated that a politeness underscores the dynamics that have been established across the Coalition, and working group dynamics are certainly respectful and cordial, the smaller group settings' unique cultures have created spaces in which conversation is drilled down and perspectives of a smaller number of members are brought to the forefront of conversation more easily.

Members have generally positive impressions of the impact of working groups so far. During interviews, a member shared, "The working groups are really another way of extending our work in DEI to our own corners of the community. It's highly personal." Another member concurred, stating that access to community relationships and resources have allowed the groups' work to progress: "Knowing that we had to dedicate ourselves to thinking very carefully through a racial equity lens, I bring that much more to my work. I did the Race Matters training twice and I bring that to our group and my own job really all the time."

However, members indicated that as each of the work groups approach/move past their implementation phase, more cohesion is needed across the groups so that the JJW can maintain its larger cohesion as it moves forward towards more global goals. One member shared:

"I think Felicia encourages [shared decision-making] in terms of individual teams...I think the leaders of the groups are great to their capacity...but I'd like to see the connectedness of bringing that whole vision together, at least every once in a while. I think that would really be encouraging."

Overall, members still feel that the culture and communication style of the JJW is effective and has influenced their drive to create even more forward momentum in group work. The work has inspired members to identify exactly how this can be done successfully, and one member stated:

“I think communication tools of collaboration and listening and shared interests...help to tie us to one another...but we talk about our systems work as though we’re all doing our best and we’re all moving together and we don’t necessary have a critical lens, but it’s important in the area of racial justice and racial equity...I certainly think we need to do that to sustain our relationships and have folks come to the table. We have to strengthen our professional and collaborative model.”

Leadership Structure Facilitates Progress

JJW members continue to describe the leadership of the Community Foundation as inclusive, participatory, and effective for facilitation of progress toward group outcomes and goals. Meeting observations confirmed equal participation and engagement between leaders/facilitators and members, supported by a structure that has garnered high buy-in, is built upon effective communication, and is open to improvement where needed. All interviewees indicated that specific leadership strategies of trust building and open dialogue are conducive to Coalition growth and unification. Members felt that the leadership structure has normalized inclusive decision-making, which in-turn empowers and encourages members to seek information from each other, connect the group to resources, and share authentic and lived experiences among the group. Members had the following to say about the leadership:

“Part of it is the way the [leadership] model was established, which made some of us feel comfort, knowing we were coming into an initiative where we were really contributing our ideas, as well as our thoughts and our energy, but with the sense that we weren’t driving it. We were part of a collaboration, we were part of a core team that was driving this. It gives folks a lot of ownership.”

The same interviewee also identified tools that leadership uses to reinforce trust, sharing:

“I think that we are given the opportunity, particularly in our small work groups, to have open conversations. I think it’s been a vehicle for developing trust, though for me, I didn’t walk in with a lack of trust. It was for me, understanding that folks come from different arenas and different thought processes, so I learned that trust wasn’t about whether we agree on the interpretation of the goals, but that we’re approaching them together.”

Members also lauded leadership styles and strategies on working groups, which have been developing over the past year and have allowed for additional group unity, trust, and collaborative efforts to be successfully established and moved forward:

“It was about establishing that relationship. It was collaborative leadership...I would never have known about some of the things I’ve learned without that. From this initiative specifically, [the leader of my working group] and I have connected, I’ve learned a lot about how to improve youth services [in the court system] because of that relationship.”

All interviewees agreed that JJW Coalition members have built trust over time while working together on the JJW, and that this trust is a building block of moving group progress forward. One interviewee stated:

“The trust I see has been grown over time, but it comes with sort of a set of boundaries. For example, I see the way the county attorney might approach engagement [of youth] versus the assistant district attorney who prosecutes in the youth part, who has created this initiative for youth restorative justice. This is not to be critical at all, this is more to be impressed by the assistant district attorney, I think she really thinks about how to defer youth and how to address their broader life needs. It’s interesting because all these relationships are interrelated and they all influence trust, and I would have never known that because I don’t do the youth part....but she reaches out to me if the kid has a problem, it’s a good relationship. It speaks to the trust in this social network.”

“I think we trust each other enough to say that if someone needs to bring something forward, it’s always a safe space to do that. I wanted to bring to the table this book I have been using to move my own trainings forward in the Buffalo Schools, and I know that my fellow coalition members are going to be open to this when I introduce the book because there’s an openness in our dialogue where I can say what I need to say and I can express what I need to express and I know that my perspective is going to be considered, and Felicia or whoever is leading is going to be supportive of that, is going to back me up. People may not agree that it’s the right resource, but I trust enough to know that I can bring it to the table and the conversation is going to be productive.”

Group Outcomes and Forward Movement

JJW members have established a more accurate and shared understanding of how the region's juvenile justice system works, with a focus on proactive and preventative initiatives such as diversion strategies. This topic has been discussed with respect to the contemporary social reckoning related to systemic discrimination in policing. A focus on examining the root causes of racial inequity with respect to policing has geared conversation toward proactive steps that can be taken to consolidate resources and knowledge of various stakeholders in the juvenile justice system. Areas of work and conversation that have been impacted by such conversations have included official policy changes in the Buffalo Public Schools Code of Conduct (which now reduce disproportionate disciplinary action toward BIPOC students, particularly males of color). Work has also included amended processes for youth treatment, discipline and legal proceedings in the family court system, largely under the supervision of the assistant district attorney. In addition, the group has facilitated large-scale training of juvenile justice-oriented institutions and staff in identification and reduction of areas of disparate treatment of youth interacting with the juvenile justice system.

One member, whose work directly impacts Buffalo Public Schools, shared substantive outcomes as a result of their work with JJW:

“Speaking to the Diversion Table...our organization is now working with the Youth Secure Center, and so really trying to bring about resources and healing to the center for workers and also for the youth and families who are affiliated with the space. We created a pilot program out of there called the Three Part Series, which is a diversion program for young people, and we saw an increase of car thefts so there was an opportunity to create, with the partners at that table, a pilot program out of that. There was also an opportunity to go into Buffalo Public Schools and support the training and the trainers that they had in incorporating more restorative practices to help reduce suspensions...and creating strong communities in the school system. It's been an opportunity to start programming that didn't exist before, and Buffalo Public Schools has funded that.”

Another member shared that progress toward improved juvenile outcomes in the court system has also been observable as a result of JJW progress:

“This [JJW] is a unique vehicle. Incremental change is where you get your transformation, so it's over the long haul, but we're seeing the change with prosecution, this is how we made that connection to restorative practices. We're already seeing movement with that and it's really because of the assistant district attorney. I wouldn't have otherwise been involved in the process of that actual implementation, but we're already seeing the outcomes.”

A second member concurred with this observation, stating:

“The NYS court system specifically at the state level has an equal justice courts initiative, and every region in the court system is tasked with helping to uphold and implement the recommendations of the equal justice initiative. It’s been very beneficial for the court system in moving forward, particularly right now with the efforts around the REIA training. And not just the training, but the coaching model also, really being something that helps to bolster the efforts within the course system around not just of bias training but the integration again of the learning into practice and work. I think our administration is really excited for that to be a piece of advancing the work that we’re already charged to do.”

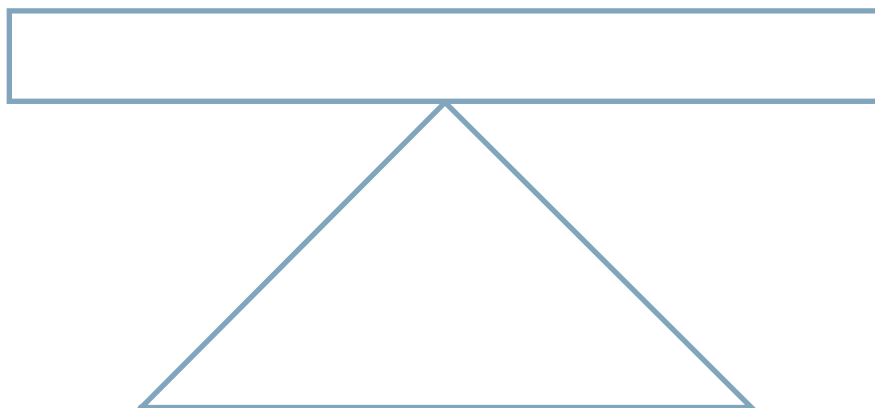
Overall, group impact is starting to be observed, and acknowledging the work that collaboration and relationships have had in that process is critical. In particular, one interviewee spoke to the tangible achievements of the Training workgroup, which serves as an example of impact currently being made as well as impact anticipated as further work unfolds:

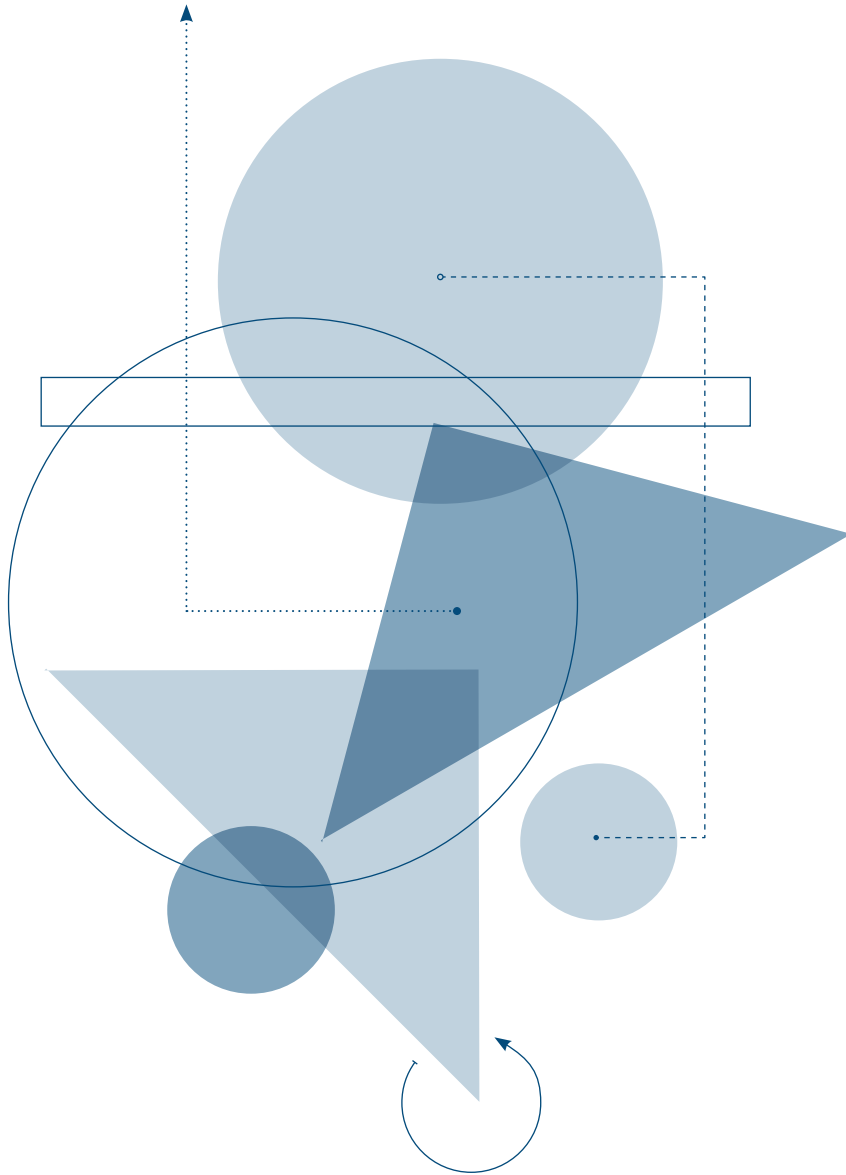
“I think the biggest shift I’ve noticed is that we’ve reasonably moved from needing to learn each other, understand the issue, think about it collectively, and then be able to move into spaces where we’re able to start developing some smaller working goals then starting to achieve them. And I think we’re there, I think we’re at the point of action. There are 60 slots that are committed for family court to participate in the REIA training, and we have the structure started for the training for the coaching model. I’m excited to get those dates done so that we can really be thinking how that will look after the learning has happened, and right now, putting the model into practice for sustainability.”

It is this kind of impact that is now characterizing the forward movement of the JJW Coalition, and a theme of continuous forward momentum underscores the overall feedback provided by its members. This is underscored by the findings from the JJW Coalition survey in Appendix C, indicating that members have maintained or increased their levels of trust and commitment to propel their long-planned work into action.

JJW Recommendations

- 1** Continue building upon the culture of trust, respect and authentic dialogue that has been established across the JJW Coalition in order to move group progress forward. Group progress has been enhanced by the group's structure and culture, which should be preserved moving forward.
- 2** Facilitate discussions as to initial successes of implementation of plans of action, as well as future action steps to be taken for both the Coalition and all four work groups so that members can continue to be their roles/expectations in that process as well as what can be improved.
- 3** Establish action steps to provide greater cohesion among movement forward across all working groups; while some members are familiar with the progress being made at this level, not all are on the same page, and this will be necessary to maintain group cohesion and maximal success as outcomes are achieved at a larger scale in the future.
- 4** The group should continue to monitor key shared measures, both as a coalition, and within working groups, so that all members are continuously on the same page as to shared measures.







**Buffalo Niagara
Partnership**

Submitted by
Seth Piccirillo

Director of Economic Development
Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Karen Brown

Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives
Buffalo Niagara Partnership



Overview

The Buffalo Niagara Partnership's (BNP) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming aims to increase inclusion in the workplace. The DEI programming (outlined below in "Program Activities") was developed in response to feedback received from its members via the member survey, in-person meetings, and DEI Executive Council meetings. The overwhelming message was that organizations desired to make their workplaces more diverse and inclusive. They recognized that achieving this requires attention and resources, but many did not know how to best access assistance. This was the focus for the research and development efforts in 2019 to produce programming for 2020 and beyond.

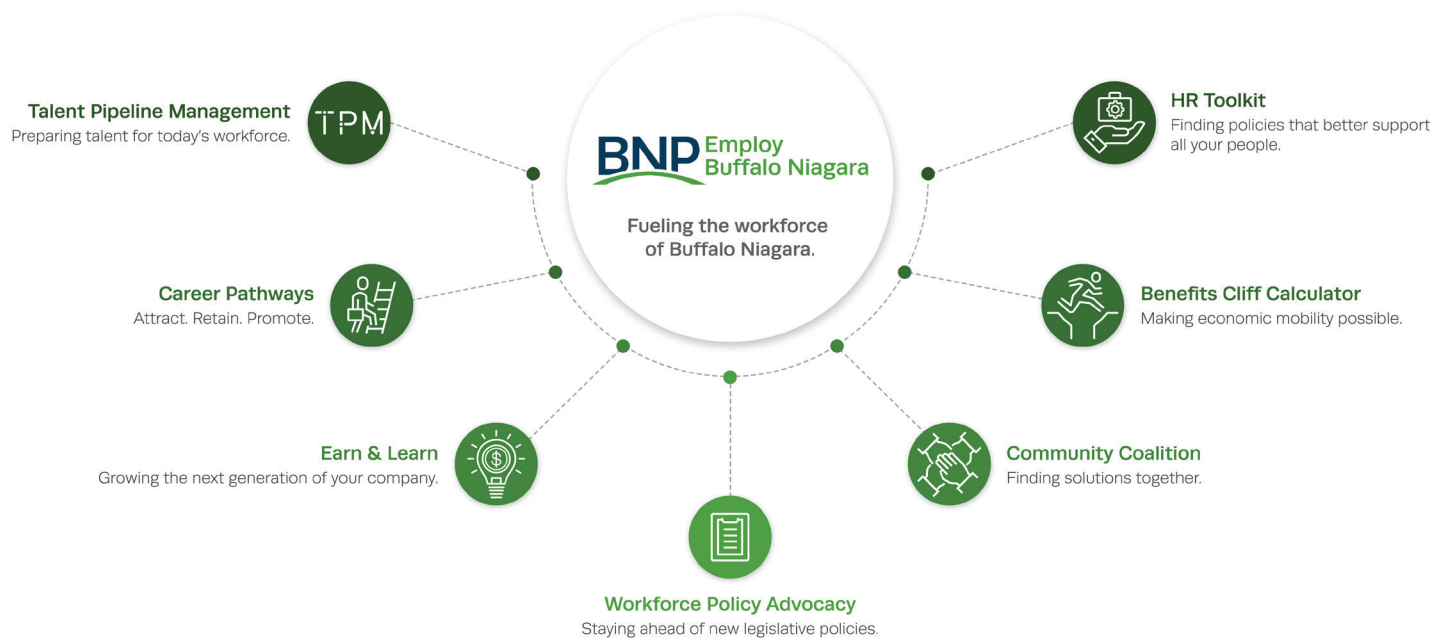
Employ Buffalo Niagara Context

The BNP's Employ Buffalo Niagara is the region's largest employer-led talent initiative. The BNP partners with employers and leaders in the education, government, and non-profit sectors throughout the Western New York Community. Representing the current interests and needs of large and small businesses, Employ Buffalo Niagara offers multiple workforce development programs. In different ways, these programs all work to create sustainable solutions for barriers to employment, upskilling low-wage earners and preparing job seekers to meet companies' evolving expectations.

Talent is the largest challenge facing the majority of WNY employers. More than 80 percent of BNP members have open positions that they cannot fill, and BNP members cite the lack of qualified workers as their number one inhibitor to growth. These challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this urgent need, there is a disconnect between employers offering hiring and promotional opportunities and job seekers looking to advance in their careers leaving missed opportunities for employers, individuals, and the economy as a whole.

By leading with the needs of employers and collaborating with other stakeholders in the workforce system, Employ Buffalo Niagara is focused on removing barriers to gainful employment and helping workers become more economically mobile while creating viable pipelines for the region's key industries. Too many people in Western New York work multiple jobs and are still unable to support their family. This reality is more unsettling given the availability of jobs in our region that pay families sustaining wages. The BNP works to bridge this divide with a lens toward equity and inclusivity.

The BNP is dedicated to employer-led workforce development solutions designed to build talent pipelines, upskill employees into jobs paying family sustaining wages, and expose jobs seekers to viable, in-demand careers in the region through the following Employing Buffalo Niagara Programs:



Methods

A variety of sources provide information on the progress of the Employ Buffalo Niagara Initiative. One primary source is direct feedback from the Community Coalition, which is led by 130 individuals from education, training, and community-based organizations. These partners and workforce intermediaries come together to share their employment challenges and find solutions that address barriers to economic mobility for the under and unemployed in our region.

Data are also gathered from partner meeting (virtually and in person) discussions and an intake form on the BNP website that employers can use to inquire about programs and schedule informational meetings. BNP also conducts several surveys, including the annual survey of BNP members, which reports on workforce and economic issues. The biennial Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Business Community Assessment provides insight into the DEI priorities of local employers.

Programmatic Timeline

- **August 2021** – *BNP completed U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management Academy training*
- **August 2021** – *Conducted a Career Pathways job seeker focus group with the Service Collaborative, Say Yes Buffalo, and the Foundry*
- **September 2021** – *Executed Talent Pipeline Management educational agreements with the Service Collaborative and ERIE 1 BOCES for our Manufacturing Collaborative*
- **September 2021** – *Published the Career Pathways job library on the Employ Buffalo Niagara website*
- **November 2021** – *Received proposal for Customer Service TPM Collaborative educational partners. Awards will be made in April 2022*
- **January 2022** – *Customer Service TPM Collaborative started participating in mock interview events*
- **March 2022** – *Launched the online Benefits Cliff Calculator on the Employ Buffalo Niagara website*
- **March 2022** – *Launched the Caring Economy TPM Collaborative*

Employ Program Updates

Career Pathways

The Career Pathways initiative helps employers better articulate and promote their unique career pathways to attract and retain key talents. Participating employers identify an entry level position with a defined career pathway, and the BNP produces tangible multimedia resources that easily explain the position, the career progression at the company, and the technical qualification needed for advancement.

Career Pathways is an intensive program that develops a custom career progression on behalf of employers through internet-based videos and clear-cut job descriptions that communicate opportunities over a five-year period. Career Pathways are making it easier to attract and retain talent by highlighting current employers that job seekers can see themselves in and then communicate new industry expectations and address long-term needs. The BNP then takes this input and identifies the training providers necessary to build a sustainable talent pipeline and provide technical skills to candidates.

To date, BNP has created an up-to-date digital library of nine Career Pathways, highlighting tangible job opportunities at companies throughout the region. Agreements with three additional companies have been created, as BNP presents

the program to more employers. Each Career Pathway includes a web-based job description featuring the entry level position's wage rate, two to three promotional opportunities within five years of the initial hire, all employee benefits and all hiring requirements. The BNP has also engaged a group of over twenty community benefit and training organizations to integrate the Career Pathways Project to their curriculums and outreach efforts. These educational partners will amplify the project's reach and connect these opportunities with more job seekers.

Talent Pipeline Management (TPM)

Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) helps employees establish a pipeline of talent that is aligned with specific requirements and evolving industry standards. Designed by the US Chamber of Commerce, TPM brings employees with similar job needs together as the end customer of a talent supply chain. Employers share common talent pain points, communicate industry expectations, and address long-term needs. The BNP then takes this input and identifies the training providers necessary to build a sustainable talent pipeline and provide technical skills to candidates.

There are currently three active TPM collaboratives: Manufacturing, Customer Service, and the Caring Economy. Three to four employers comprise each collaborative with approximately 50 open positions in each. The Manufacturing collaborative is also highlighting earn-and-learn, apprenticeship and internship opportunities at member companies, as a potential feeder to full time employment. The Customer Service collaborative recently identified a preferred training provider and continues to explore funding solutions for job candidate training. The Caring Economy collaborative kicked off in April and is dedicated to helping build a pipeline of direct support professionals for agencies serving the developmentally disabled. The BNP is also exploring the viability of a driver/logistics TPM collaborative to service a growing need for professional drivers across all sectors.

The Benefits Cliff Calculator

The "benefits cliff" is when an increase in pay results in a sudden loss of government support. Many underemployed workers are stuck in jobs they are overqualified for, or ready to be upskilled, yet stay in their current positions due to the threat of the benefits cliff. The better pay does not compensate for the resulting sudden loss of their benefits. When this happens, businesses lose out on recruiting or growing talent, employees lose the opportunity to advance their career, and our entire community loses out on hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars over the course of a lifetime. To overcome these challenges, employers must have a better understanding of where the benefits cliff is and that that number is different for every individual.

Employ Buffalo Niagara, along with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, has created this Benefits Cliff Calculator –a free, simple tool that will do the math to calculate an individual's benefit cliff. Employees, employers, and workforce entities can plug benefits and potential income increases to gain a better understanding of how employees can thrive, businesses can promote promising talent, and how all members of our region can be carried toward financial security and independence.

The tool will also help the public sector understand the urgent need for policy change to lessen the impact of the benefits cliff moving forward.

The Benefits Cliff Calculator was released to the public in early March 2022 and is accessible on the BNP's website. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is finalizing an employer specific version that will allow employers to adjust specific inputs such as benefits and wages for their positions to see the impact in real time. A consultant has been engaged to develop the multi-year marketing and communication campaign for various audiences such as individuals receiving benefits, employers, workforce intermediaries (education/training/CBO's), and public policy makers.

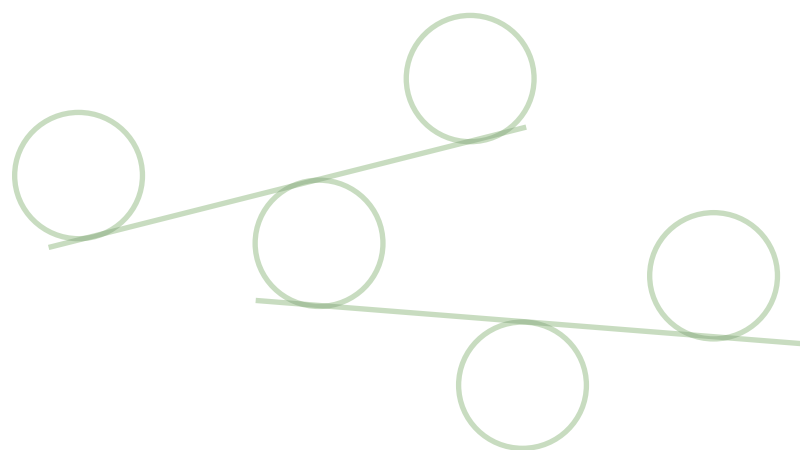
Human Resources (HR) Toolkit (Launching soon)

Employ Buffalo Niagara's HR Toolkit is a go-to source of vetted HR policies designed to help employees stay and advance. This interactive tool allows employers to better match company practices and offerings with employees' needs. The HR Toolkit is an online tool to help employers ensure that their HR policies and benefits are valuable to all employees. Simply select the criteria for your workplace concern and the toolkit will match an employer with a series of HR policies and assistance recommendations designed to:

- *Support the advancement of the underemployed*
- *Promote the building of diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces*
- *Align company culture goals with human resource practices*

Recommendations

- 1** Expanding collaboration with Career Pathway educational/CBOs to incorporate the program into regional curriculum and training programs to reach a wide and diverse range of job seekers
- 2** Continue to expand the number of employers participating in Career Pathway
- 3** Add future TPM collaboratives
- 4** Continue to connect employers, policy makers, and CBOs to the Benefits Cliff Calculator
- 5** Launch the HR Toolkit as a companion to the Benefits Cliff Calculator





**My Brother's Keeper -
Boys and Young Men
of Color Initiative
(MBK-BMoC)**



Written by Tommy McClam
Senior Director of Boys and Men of Color
Say Yes Buffalo

Context

The overarching goal of the Say Yes Buffalo Boys and Men of Color (MBK-BMoC) Initiative is to expand equitable access to opportunities and to advance outcomes for boys and men of color across the City of Buffalo while developing youth leadership and advocates for change.

The primary target population of this initiative includes boys and men of color between the ages of 12 and 24 who reside in the City of Buffalo, both in-school and out of school. The outreach vehicle is the Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council (BBYLC) which is open to all young men of color—both in and out of school—who reside in the City of Buffalo and its outer ring. Our work also touches youth beyond our primary population through partnerships with many local partner organizations that serve youth.

As designated by the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) and with the help of the John R. Oishei and Ralph C. Wilson Foundations, Say Yes Buffalo serves as a lead contributor to the MBK-BMoC Initiative, a community-wide collaborative dedicated to advancing equitable outcomes for boys and men of color. Since the inception of our MBK-BMoC initiative in 2017, the cross-sector initiative team of partners has driven forward a remarkably robust set of programs focused on youth

mentorship and empowerment designed to promote racially equitable access to opportunities and increase outcomes for all youth across the city of Buffalo.

Historically, the heart of this initiative has been the BBYLC, which engages young men of color ages 12-24 in an intensive year-long youth mentorship and empowerment program. With youth voice as the driver, a robust curriculum was developed and, in 2022, was expanded to include 30 evidence-based modules specifically for young men of color. The lessons are focused on cultivating personal growth and leadership skills and elevating youth voices to advocate for social justice, racial equity, and policy change. In addition to weekly meetings and regular workshops/training, the BBYLC leads political advocacy trips, participates in volunteer and community-based events, and has produced its fifth season of the Breaking Barriers podcast focused on transforming narratives about young men of color. Our program has also expanded to offer multiple professional skill development programs for Black and Brown young men, including sports management, research and program evaluation, and digital media production programs.



Photo Credit: Breaking Barriers Podcast – Youth Lead Breaking Barriers Podcast interview – 5th season of the podcast: Daniel Robertson, Xavier Lamar, Dorian Withrow, and guest.

A highlight of 2021 was the first Breaking Barriers Summer Weekend retreat. It was a powerfully transformative experience for all 35 participants and community volunteers. The young men bonded; they were immersed in our empowerment curriculum, developed relationships with the community mentors who volunteered to chaperone, built a new appreciation for nature, grew their voices, and left inspired to be change agents in and from their community.

In addition to the clear and pressing need for initiatives such as this in the Buffalo community, it is worth noting how closely this initiative aligns with the overall priority programs of the GBREER areas:

The decision to house this work under the Say Yes Buffalo umbrella, combined with our focus on youth mentorship, training, and empowerment, and our policy commitments to college access and readiness for boys and men of color, makes this initiative a powerful tool for strengthening the educational continuum for young men of color.

Our focus on empowerment, the introduction of new professional skill development programs within the BMoC Initiative, and our policy commitments to establishing career pathways and increasing equitable economic opportunities make the initiative a tool for enhancing options for self-sufficiency.

Our commitment to empowering youth to be leaders in their communities, our efforts to build a sense of civic responsibility, and our focus on cultivating city-wide brotherhood through expanded access to our Breaking Barriers curriculum and programming contribute to building livable, stable neighborhoods.

Our emphasis on cross-sector partnership work, our efforts to embed programming within Buffalo Public school buildings and community-based organizations, and our collaborative efforts with the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Public Schools, and Say Yes Buffalo school-based staff providing referrals and case management to youth in need of additional supports contribute to the promotion of health and improving systems of care.

Our curricular focus on youth knowing their histories and telling their stories centers on the importance of arts, culture, and heritage. It explicitly elevates the voices and narratives of Black and Brown young men across the region.

By maintaining the BBYLC as a central hub for engagement for youth across the city, we see our work as part of a relationship-focused violence-reduction and peace-building strategy during heightened needs in our neighborhoods.

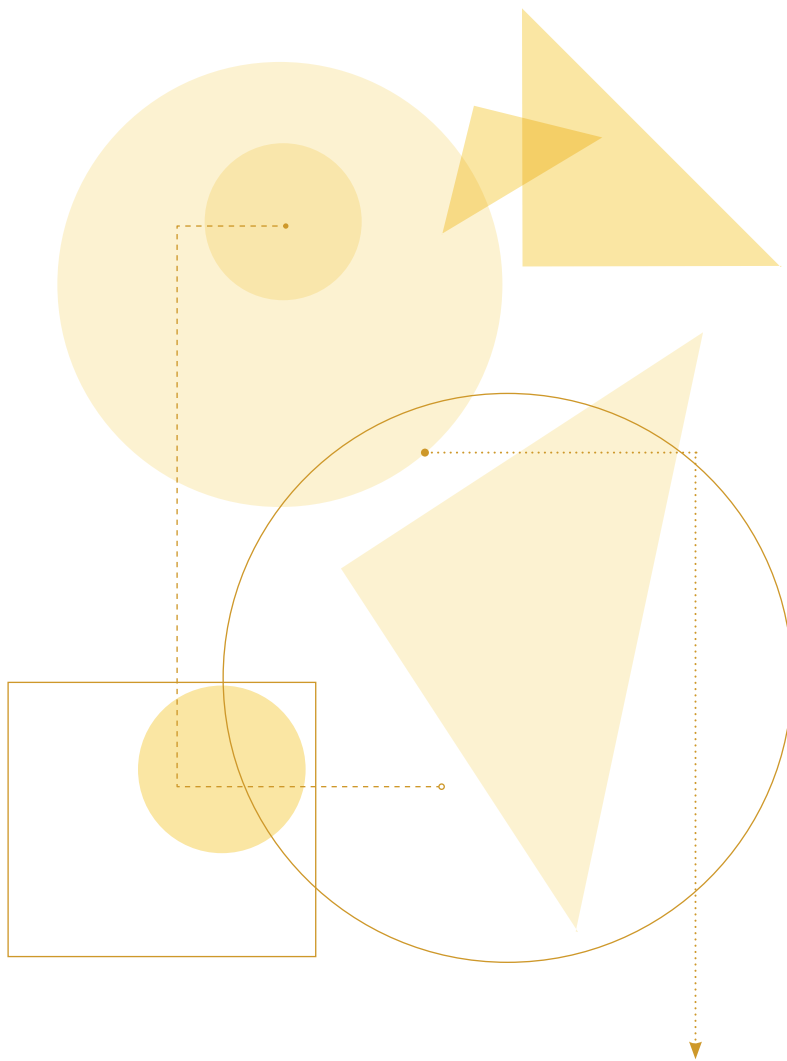
The BMoC initiative has already begun piloting the delivery of our revamped curriculum as an elective for high-risk youth within two Buffalo Public High Schools (McKinley and Riverside High Schools).

In our next phase of the initiative, we will prepare to launch a quarterly facilitator training program open to faith-based and community-based youth service providers interested in implementing the Breaking Barriers program and curriculum. Our goal is to significantly increase the number of entry points to our program and expand the reach of our empowerment curriculum to improve the lives of young men of color throughout our region.

In our fifth year, evidence of impact is seen as our young men matriculating and persisting, achieving post-secondary attainment, being employed, and passionately giving back to their community. The MBK-BMoC Initiative is pursuing an ambitious growth phase through expanded strategic partnerships with the Buffalo Public Schools , faith communities, City of Buffalo youth centers and programs, and community-based service providers. Our continued goal is to connect education, community, and opportunities for Boys and Young Men of Color.



Credit: Deonte Brown is a 4-year member of the Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council who now attends and is a junior at Howard University.





Racial Healing Circles

Background

The GBRRER decided to introduce Racial Healing Circles into the Western New York Area via an inter-congregational strategy. Over the last three years, the National Federation for Just Communities (NFJC) has taken over the organization and the administration of Racial Healing Circles. Racial Healing Circles are an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to proactively come together in a circle to dialogue about race and race related issues. People who engage in Racial Healing Circles are ready to experience the circle process with a focus on racial healing and are interested in learning how to bring racial conversations to their communities. This has allowed NFJC to help draw more participants into the holistic approach of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable and communicate its important work in the community and beyond. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation trained local Racial Healing Circle facilitators at the outset of the TRHT grant period.

Context

Going into 2022, Racial Healing Circles are especially needed as the community starts to emerge from the isolation due to COVID-19. As the social justice movement opened the door for these conversations to be normalized, the pandemic highlighted how important it is to re-learn how to interact with each other.

For the past several years, the NFJC has had to overcome the digital divide and has found that by providing a space and a platform electronically for Racial Healing conversations to take place online, it has allowed for people to meet more freely and equitably without the visible barriers that mask-wearing creates. The NFJC anticipates that Racial Healing Circles will continue online in the coming year so as to not create any uncomfortable divides or political conversations that may derail the progress being made. The community has been very receptive and open to online Racial Healing Circles over the past three years. Requests for Racial Healing Circles, similarly to last year, remain high.

Engagement

Over this past year, the NFJC held 15 Racial Healing Circles. These events ranged from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours in length. To immediately evaluate effectiveness, each participant was offered an opportunity to provide immediate feedback at the completion of a circle via an online survey.

Participant attendance for Racial Healing Circles ranged between an average of 20-30 people per session to upwards of 60 people per session. In total, over 500 people received direct service related to Racial Healing Circles. It is estimated that an additional two people per one Racial Healing Circle participant will have indirect contact with the program as participants discuss their experience within their networks. Using this average, an additional 1000 people will have heard about the Racial Healing Circles indirectly. Additionally, the NFJC has done a marketing push to promote the availability of Racial Healing Circles.

Impact

The NFJC has found that those who participated in a Racial Healing Circle were tremendously impacted and were deeply engaged in the conversations at hand. Participants felt educated and empowered to continue the dialogue outside of the established “safe space” that a Racial Healing Circle provides and often felt a need to repeat their time in a Racial Healing Circle and extend the conversations into their networks. Ultimately, there have been requests for further education and training that has allowed the NFJC to connect additional services and to wrap Racial Healing Circles into other GBREER programs, services, and community resources.

Addressing Past Needs

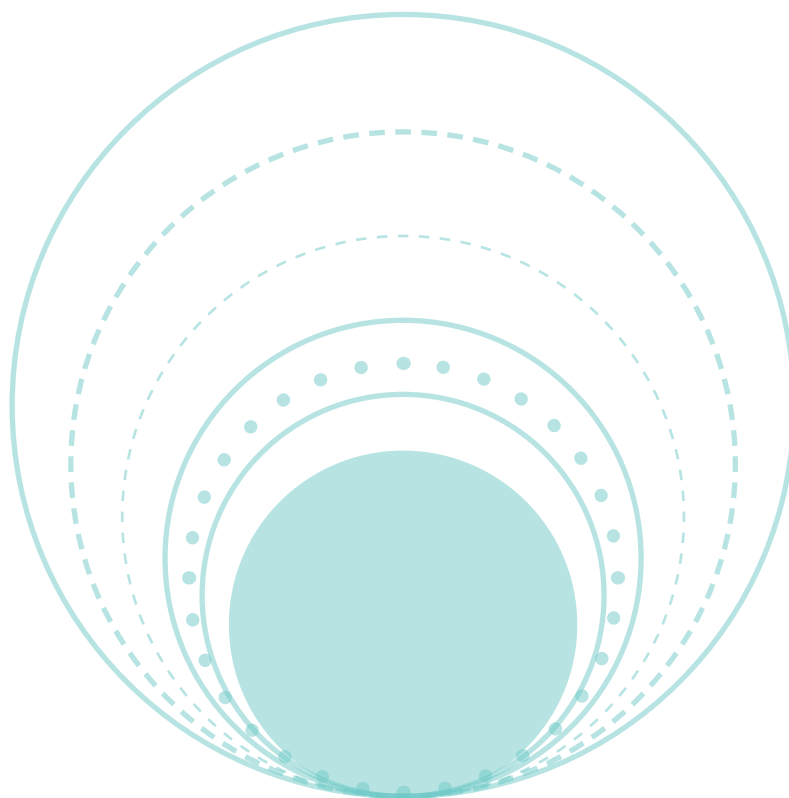
Two challenges that the NFJC experienced over the last year while administering Racial Healing Circles were (1) continuing to adjust to providing Racial Healing Circles over an online platform and (2) observing signs of potential facilitator burn-out. To address the latter, the NFJC has established debrief sessions for facilitators, particularly those who facilitate multiple Racial Healing Circles. Additionally, the NFJC has a rotating list of facilitators who are called upon to facilitate Racial Healing Circles to decrease the chances of burnout.

As Racial Healing Circles continue with support from the NFJC, the NFJC continues to seek opportunities for collaboration particularly given the higher-than-expected demand from the community for Racial Healing Circles. The Community Foundation remains a financial and as-needed content collaborator, the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition has provided facilitation support, and other organizations like the Commission to Dismantle Racism and Dissemination, Elim Christian Fellowship, and other local faith leaders and organizations collaborated on activities for the National Day of Racial Healing.

Recommendations

- 1** The NFJC highly recommends the continuation of Racial Healing Circles, including the expansion and re-introduction of in-person settings and the continuation of online meetings. The NFJC has found that deep conversation and listening can happen both virtually and in-person as evidenced by the increase in Racial Healing Circle requests and usage.
- 2** The NFJC hopes to include a younger demographic in this process moving forward, as there is a desire to have youth voices included in such important conversations.
- 3** The NFJC will continue to train additional facilitators in the Racial Healing Circle methodology.

For more information on Racial Healing Circles, see the NFJC's 2021 Racial Healing Circle Year End Report in Appendix C.





Racial Impact and Analysis Training (REIAT)

Years 4 & 5

(April 2020- March 2022)

This evaluation summary describes the implementation and outcomes of the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Training initiative (REIAT) during years four and five. By design, initiative activities continued to focus on providing training to organizations in Greater Buffalo who expressed interest in using their operations and position to contribute to increasing racial equity internally and across the broader community. In addition to training for organizational leaders and selected staff, participation involves identification of “coaches” who advocate for the application of the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Tool to a variety of organizational functions.

Background

In 2016 and 2017, a new initiative of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) sought to engage influential organizations in conducting Racial Equity Impact Analyses to establish a foundation for regional systems and culture change by taking steps within their own enterprises to promote constructive discourse, increase awareness of structural bias, and reduce their risk of contributing to disparities. A network recruiting approach identified thought-leading organizations across the sectors well positioned to help advance the work community-wide. These organizations would be offered training and follow-up support through “coaching of the coaches” identified to lead change on behalf of their organization.

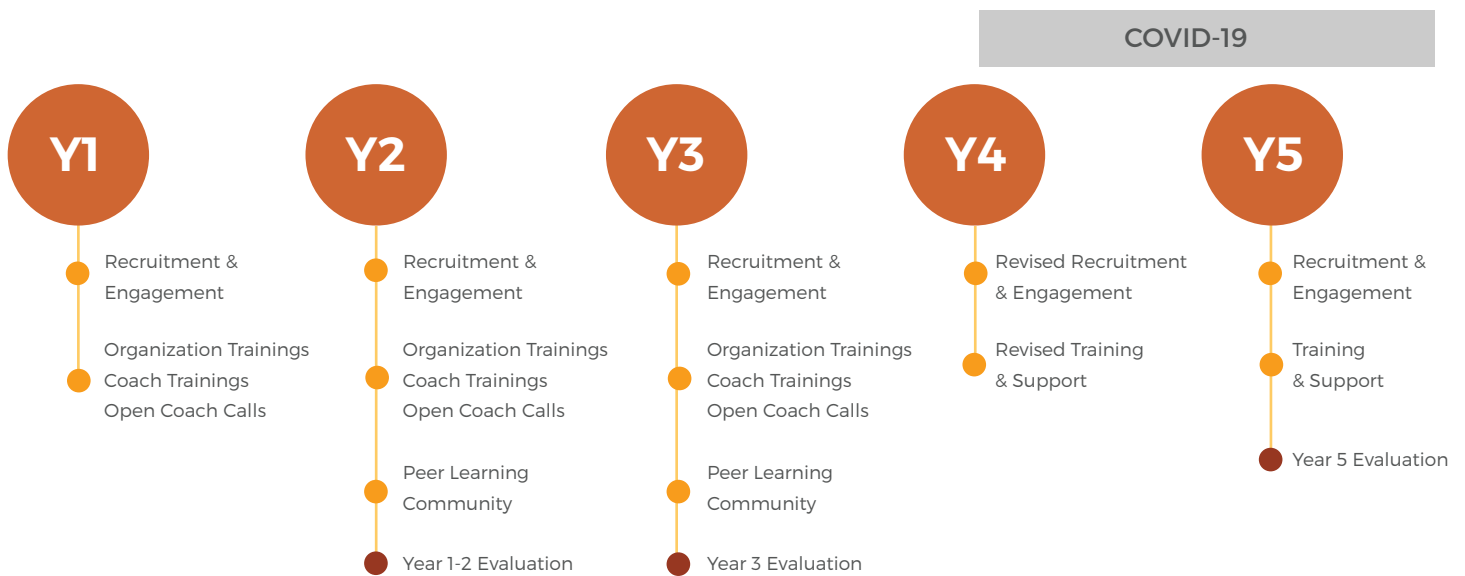
Working with the GBRER of the Community Foundation, the Race Matters Institute (RMI) tailored their standard REIAT by incorporating examples from regional history as well as applications deemed likely among participants (e.g., work force analyses). The training includes content to raise awareness of historical forces that shape disparities. Exercises build skills to develop a shared language around race, integrate a structural/institutional lens in their work, and apply the Impact Analysis to center race equity in decision making and prevent disparate impact of organizational policies and practices.

Like other GBRRER related activities, critical dimensions for understanding the initiative's quality and impact include: engagement of organizations to train and apply the impact analysis lens to their work, empowerment of coaches and other participants to contribute to improving race equity, organizational decision making that reflects race equity analysis, efforts to contribute to adopting more authentic narratives regarding race and equity, and advancing and informing successful efforts to contribute to broader systems change so that regional prosperity and opportunities are open to all.

Ongoing reflective practice, informal feedback, and formal evaluations have been focused primarily on providing useful feedback for further program refinement and administration, as well as preparing data for administrative reporting. Issues addressed include:

- *Initial training and follow-up support and training for organization leaders and coaches*
- *Outreach efforts and success as reflected by breadth of community penetration*
- *Teaming, outreach coordination, and information sharing to improve offerings, increase efficiency, and results*

Figure 1. summarizes initiative evolution over five years leading up to the current evaluation.



Five-Year Timeline Key Activities 2018-2022

Evidence for community engagement, training quality, and impact cited in the past have included indicators of community penetration, trainee satisfaction, and organizational change. Trainee satisfaction and perceived impact were reflected in self-reported gains in understanding and readiness to apply training content as well as strong ratings of training material and delivery. Interviews with organizational representatives have pointed to examples of successful application of the analytic lens to catalyze changes in hiring, job descriptions, workplace policy and procedures, purchasing, and customer relations practices. Additionally, each organization is required to develop a DEI workplan as part of REIAT.

Obstacles noted in the past to facilitating greater and more efficient results in partnership with participating organizations have included factors related to both implementation and organizational readiness. Implementation challenges addressed in past formal and informal evaluation included the provision of comprehensive preparation of organizational leaders and participants so that organizations understand their commitment, and adequate staffing for consistent coordination and timely communication across the initiative team so that trainers feel fully informed. Prior evaluations noted obstacles for organizations making greater use of the training and coach supports including the need for training to incorporate more relevant and actionable examples, the need for organizations to identify coaches who have time and capacity to advocate persistently and successfully for organizational change, and senior leaders ready to consistently champion the efforts over time.

A variety of adjustments have been made in an effort to address these concerns and optimize impact, including clarification of the procedure for responding to inquiries, increasing support staffing, and increasing the trainers' time for preparation calls with organization representatives. As described in the most recent evaluation report (Year 3 - "Going Deeper"), the initiative team made a concerted effort to streamline the coordination and preparation of participating organizations and deepen the commitment of organizational leaders and coaches to pursue their goals. While initially some organizations sent representatives to training to "explore" whether the approach fit their organizational needs and interests, Year 3 marked an effort to intensify engagement of organizations more fully from the start: training their leaders and empowering internal coaches to advocate for organizational changes, and focusing more training and support on organizational change plan development. RMI continued to hone post-training supports for the coaches, including specialized training, and facilitating an ongoing community of practice to share experience, lessons, and support. Reflecting on feedback from coaches and their own observations, trainers suggested that staff should more consistently check-in, encourage further action, and collect feedback on application of training content at regular intervals (i.e., at 3-, 6-, 9- and 12 months).

REIAT Participation

As summarized in Table 1, there were 102 coaches trained from 49 organizations during the revised training and coach support regimen. The largest groups of coaches come from the Arts and Culture (N=30), followed by Education (25), Non-profit Health and Human Services (22) and Government (18) sectors. Business and Faith communities were also represented, albeit in smaller numbers. Note that the count of organizations is approximate because some larger organizations sent multiple coaches and treated each of their operating units as a separate organization in terms of training, coach supports, and goal setting.

Table 1. Participants in revised Training and Coach Support Offerings.

	Year 3* (2019-20)	Year 4 (2020-21)	Year 5 (2021-22)	Arts & Culture "cohort"	Total in Period
New organizations recruited and engaged	22	13	4	10	49
New Coaches trained	38	25	9	30	102

*Organizations engaging in the redesigned training and supports were included from Year 3.

As a result of the program refinements, participating organizations since Spring 2019 have been offered the following opportunities for training and ongoing support:

Recruitment: Originally, organizations were identified for outreach recruitment because of their known interest or their position as a visible thought leader and influencer. Over time, that strategy evolved to increase engagement and mutual support for other initiatives/coalitions of the GBRER. Most recently, organizations enter the training program through four "asymmetric" doorways accounting for varying numbers of participants.

Some organizations have close connections to members of the GBREER or the Community Foundation. A second pathway is through an organization's involvement in another initiative of the GBREER and the understanding that the training would help support their participation as well as find a motivated audience. A third pathway is that of voluntary engagement by organizations requesting the training. Fourth, some institutional civic sector leaders continue to be targeted for participation in order to serve as "building blocks for institutional and systemic change."

Cohort Engagement: An innovation introduced in 2021 was the composition of a cultural-arts cohort of similar organizations trained together and invited to participate in follow-up supports. Additional funding was secured, allowing up to 16 organizations to train together. The rationale anticipated that the overlapping missions, preexisting networked relationships, and aligned values and activities might help reinforce each organization's commitment, speed their learning, and amplify their results.

Expectation Setting: After identifying an interest, REIAT staff seek to secure informed commitment, providing information regarding the expectations for organizational activities during and after the training. Prior years' feedback helped to shape the current practice of providing a written description of the activities and standardized expectations. Similarly, individualized meetings with organization leadership and the designated coach aimed to deepen the engagement through familiarity with the trainer, preview of content, and input into examples to be integrated in the respective organization's training.

Work Plan: Midway through Year 3, a work plan format was introduced by trainers to underscore expectations and facilitate engagement beyond the coaches to organizational leadership. The development of a formal work plan also enabled coaches and trainers to have a formal, explicit discussion about their activities, and anticipate obstacles. Moreover, trainers and coaches alike could hold organizations more accountable, using follow-up contacts six months post training to assess progress on specific commitments with each participating organization.

REIA Tool Training: In 2020-2022, training for leaders, coaches, and staff continued to evolve, primarily through ongoing attempts to integrate relevant examples demonstrating application. The trainers continue to wrestle with the ongoing challenge of helping participants see how they are part of the historical trends and societal dynamics propelling structural racism and unintentional biases, while also seeing that they can be part of a constructive response. Recent adjustments included adapting to trainees who were not the expected decision makers or who arrived for training unmotivated. For instance, they adjusted the sequencing and developed alternative strategies for engaging new participants who thought they did not need the training because they were "color-blind" already.

Coach Training Sequence: Redesigned midway through Year 3, a coach strength-building and follow-up training series aimed to provide more structured on-going engagement and support for coaches. The enriched four-session orientation

included: an advanced practice session on applying the REIA tool; group session on developing individualized work plans; and two sessions on communications concerning race terms, data, and addressing structural racism. The sequence was extended to six sessions for the funded cultural organization cohort.

Topical Trainings: Periodically, the trainers offered supplementary two-hour sessions to address some of the most consistent challenges and applications reported by coaches as they attempted to promote change within their organizations. These trainings included more advanced sessions on work planning to refine goals and identify relevant objectives, back mapping to design tasks aimed to accomplish organizational goals, communications/messaging, and job descriptions/hiring.

Training Implementation Note: During discussion of the training process, trainers observed that, at times, the actual attendees were not the expected attendees, or they received late notice of alternative attendee expectations. Trainers expressed concern that improvising adjustments compromises efforts to tailor training designed for decision-makers and to use relevant examples for different target participants. Trainers described how this became even more complicated amid the pandemic and the community events following George Floyd.

Individual Consultation: Coaches also had the option to continue to address specific inquiries and requests to the trainer team. Sometimes, this led to individual coaching of coaches. Sometimes this led to tailored trainings or workshops for specific work groups. Extended individual consultation and additional training sequences could be arranged separately.

Evaluation Approach

The Year Five evaluation focuses on feedback about implementation, organizational impact, and resulting lessons following these program refinements. Focal evaluation questions examined in this report include:

1. How was the revised REIAT program experienced by participants?
2. To what extent did participating organizations describe progress on their Race Equity goals within their organization as well as any goals contributing to community and systemic change?
3. What factors were associated with facilitating or obstructing progress?
4. What do respondents' lessons and suggestions mean for program refinement?
5. What's next? What does this feedback imply for amplifying impact?

Across all information sources, the analysis considers five cross-cutting dimensions of community change consistent with other evaluations contributing to the overall assessment of the GBRER. These include: Engagement (What drives commitment and engagement of organizational participants?), Empowerment (What contributes to trainee, coach, and organizations' empowerment to make organizational changes and advance equity in the community?), Decision making (How are organizational decisions made?), Narrative change (How has participants' understanding of equity and Buffalo changed?), and Systems change (What evidence is there that this initiative is contributing to systems change?)

Primary information sources contributing to this summary include:

Initiative Team Member Interviews. Questions for staff focused on the evolution of the training protocol, and possible implications for further work in Greater Buffalo, as well as similar efforts in other locations.

Coach Questionnaire. A 10-20-minute e-survey was distributed to all coaches participating between May 2019 and October 2021, allowing for at least six months of coach activity to facilitate organizational change before assessment. Domains examined included: utilization and perceptions of support opportunities; self-reported organizational changes described as related to REIAT; and perceptions of facilitators and obstacles to further impact. Open-ended questions invited recommendations for improving the initiative and advice for other similar efforts.

Mini-Case Studies. Additional interviews enabled a deeper exploration of illustrative goal setting, activity, and results among organizations pursuing community- and systems-change. The semi-structured interviews focused on goal setting, activities, perceived progress, and the internal and external factors that influenced results on these specific goals. Discussions examined signs of systems change at four levels: events and trends in activities, interaction patterns, cultural context, and responses addressing root causes. Additionally, coaches were encouraged to identify opportunities to offer further support for community and systems change making, as well as potential implications of their experience for other organizations in the region and beyond.

Using e-survey responses and initiative team input, four organizations were sampled purposefully to help explore common paths to community and systems impacts. These include:

- 1. extending needed, more culturally relevant services at greater scale*
- 2. building capacity among pre-existing coalitions of concerned community residents*
- 3. advocacy for legislative, regulatory or resource allocation changes*
- 4. engaging government system leaders directly in training and coach support*

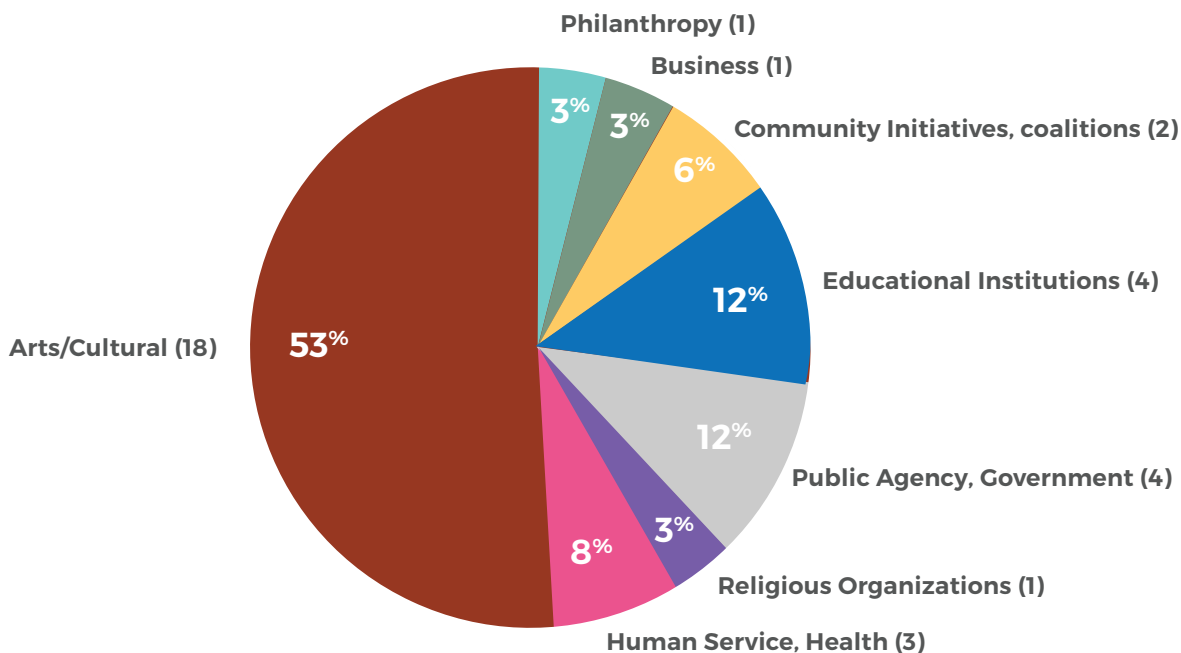
Key Findings

Question 1. Participant Experience

The coaches and organizations responding to the evaluation survey reflect a diverse slice of the community, bringing to bear extensive experience, attention, and resources to promote racial equity. Initiative staff identified 102 coaches meeting inclusion criteria. Responses were received from 34 coaches, representing a 33% response rate, which is slightly above average for email surveys of former customers/participants. While the range and depth of responses is informative, and the insights and advice shared may be useful, **the potential for bias and lack of information on nonresponding organizations warrants caution regarding generalizing conclusions based only on these respondents to other participating organizations and similar efforts elsewhere.**

Organization characteristics: The 34 respondents represented all community sectors. As illustrated in Figure 2, just over half were arts/cultural organizations, reflecting the active engagement practice in the recent effort to develop a specialized cohort of peer organizations. **The differential participation suggests that the following descriptions overrepresent the perceptions of this cohort, though the remaining respondents were roughly aligned with their proportion of trainees.**

Figure 2. About half of respondents were participating in the Arts/Cultural cohort.

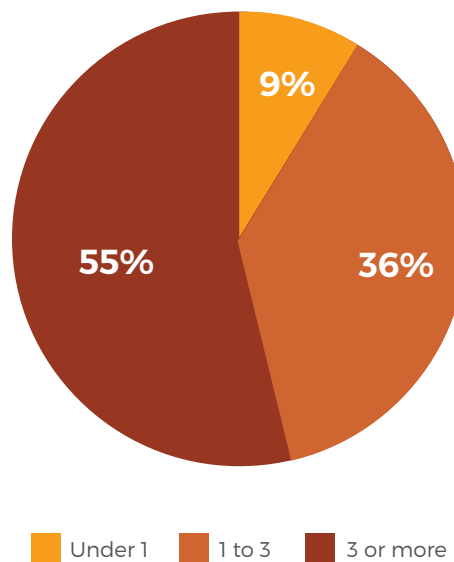


34 Total Respondents

Organizations surveyed were generally large and experienced in the community. Fully 42% had more than 100 employees, and 21% had between 51 and 100 employees. Only one in ten had fewer than 11 employees. That said, coaches in larger organizations were often focused primarily on smaller subunits within their organizations (e.g., human resources department within a larger agency or committee of leaders representing a coalition of larger community-based organizations).

Respondent characteristics: The coaches' median age was between 51-64 and no respondents were under age 31. About 82% of the respondents identified as female. About 68% of the respondents identified as White, 15% as Black, and 6% as multiracial. The remaining respondents either skipped the item or identified as Latinx or Other. The individuals responding to the e-survey appear to be experienced within their organizations and race equity promotion roles. The median tenure within the organization was 5-10 years, and fully one fourth had 11 or more years' experience with their organization. Only one-third had spent fewer than five years within their present organization.

Figure 3. Over half of the respondents have held race equity promotion role for 3+ years

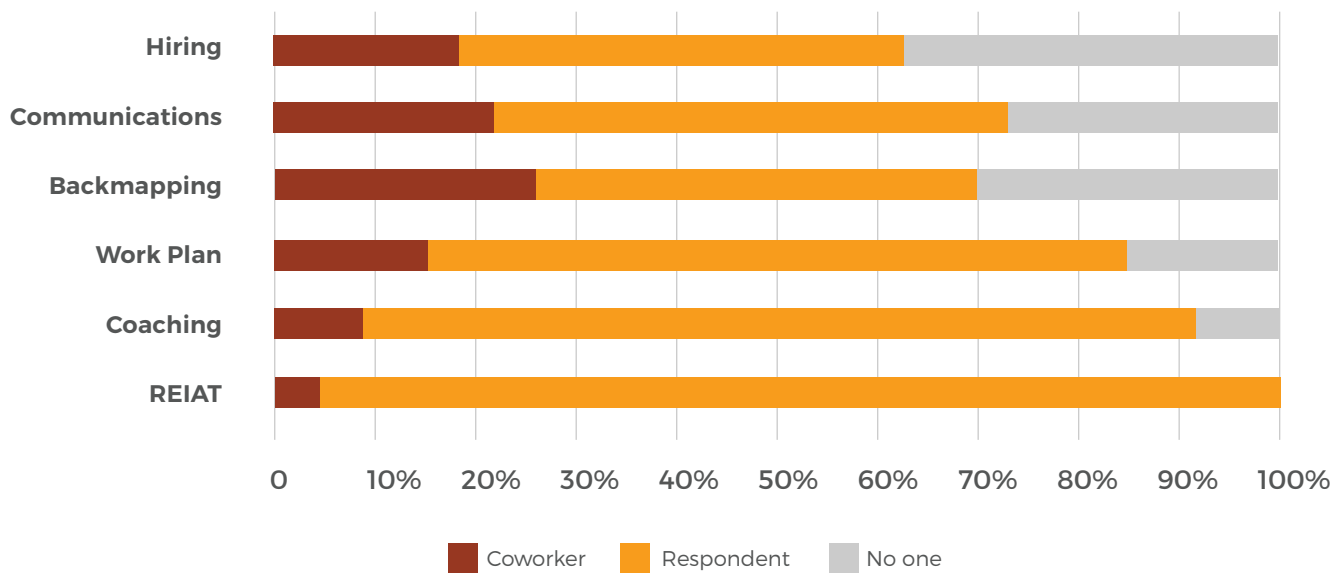


While most held similar responsibilities for more than three years, one in ten were new to the role, having held responsibilities for promoting race equity for less than one year.

Respondents appear to be well positioned to facilitate the work, coming primarily from senior leadership (42%), the Board (24%), or Middle Management (24%).

Initiative Support Utilization: Respondents described a range of experience with the initiative, though some had trouble recalling specific supports offered. As noted in Figure 4, all respondents indicated that either they or at least one co-worker, often a predecessor in the coach role, participated in the initial REIAT training. Similarly, nearly all reported participating in the primary training for coaches. In contrast, participation reports were lower and less confident concerning the more recent specialized trainings. As indicated by the respondents able to answer, the rates of participation were decreased across offerings focused on backmapping, organizational learning activities based on their specific goals, communications, and hiring and work planning support activities. At the same time, more recent introduction, limited familiarity with these trainings and the terms used to describe them, and the time elapsed since earlier offerings may have contributed to the percentage of respondents who were unsure or did not know rising among these activities (i.e., 24%, 41%, 44% and 53%, respectively).

Figure 4. Respondents reported high levels of participation across training activities



Over half of the respondents who were able to recall described initiative staff providing other supports to their organization. About 56% of the organizations described more customized supports (additional trainings for department staff, or individual consultations on approaching organizational change). Examples of comments include:

“We did additional training for all of our board members.”

“Meeting with Felicia Beard to talk about using the REIA.”

“I received an email follow-up consultation with Paula Dressel and it was very helpful.”

“We hired RMI/Anthony for four additional trainings for board, staff, stagehands and wardrobe union members.”

A similar percentage recalled receiving relevant training or consultation from other sources. Examples of comments include:

“Buffalo Public School’s disproportionality training.”

“Coordinated Community Services, Inc is pursuing a pivot to anti-racism as a matter of business ethics and they are training the entire workforce and especially the supervisors.”

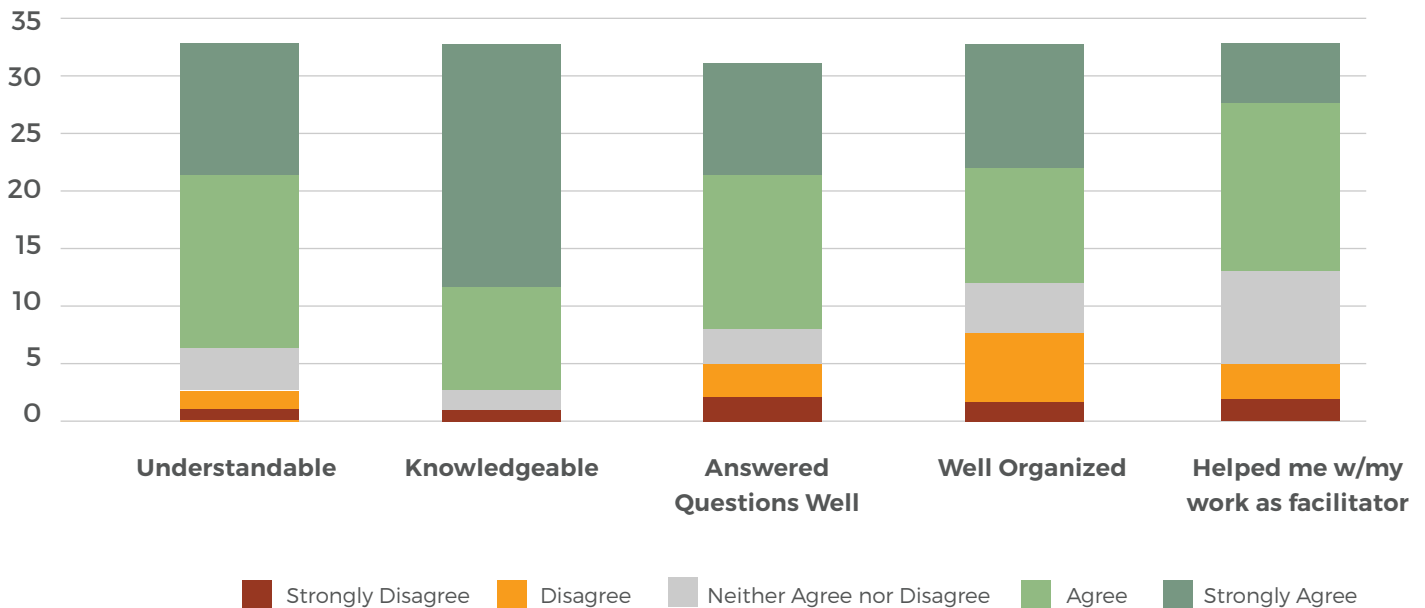
“I have participated in many diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings.”

“So many! Cultural competency and cultural humility trainings, racial equity book discussions, anti-racist syllabus and grading resources, too many to list.”

The high numbers of respondents indicating that they were “not sure” suggest caution is warranted regarding any broad conclusions on utilization. The next section focuses on the perceptions of training when the respondent was confident in their recollection.

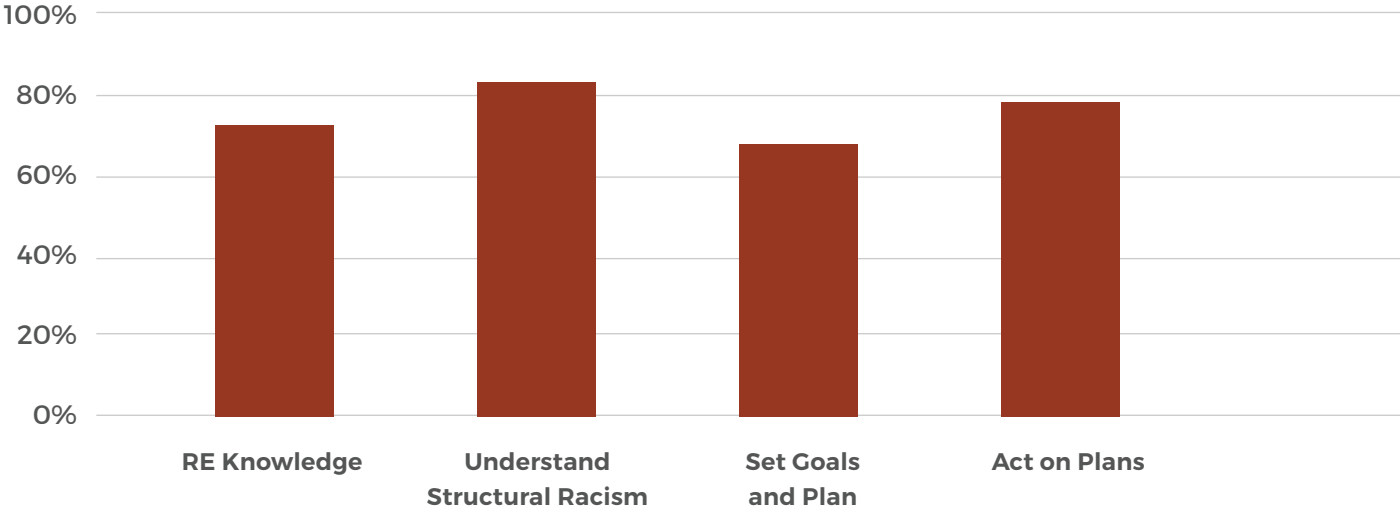
Perception of Implementation and Impact: Respondents clearly appreciate the quality of activity facilitation, and generally feel that the support activities are contributing to organizational progress. Figure 5 illustrates how most respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the trainings and trainers were: understandable (82%), knowledgeable (91%), and addressed questions well (75%). Slightly fewer than two in three respondents indicated agreement that the training was well organized (64%) and that it helped them in their organizational change facilitator role (61%). On this item, few respondents disagreed, but there were more neutral responses, perhaps reflecting more of a mixed sense of organizational progress.

Figure 5. Most respondents agreed that activity facilitation was implemented well and helpful



About 80% of respondents indicated improvements on their racial equity and organizational change capacities. As reported in Figure 6, these include their organization’s overall knowledge concerning race equity (73%), understanding structural racism (82%), setting goals and making plans (70%), and enacting those plans (79%). Nearly all respondents reported that their organizational capacity on these indicators were Good or Better after participating. Fully 78% reported that they were moderately or extremely likely to implement REIAT, and many similarly thought they would pursue additional training in the tool (79%) or other organizational change strategies (82%).

Figure 6. 70-80% of the organizations reported improvements in understanding and change making

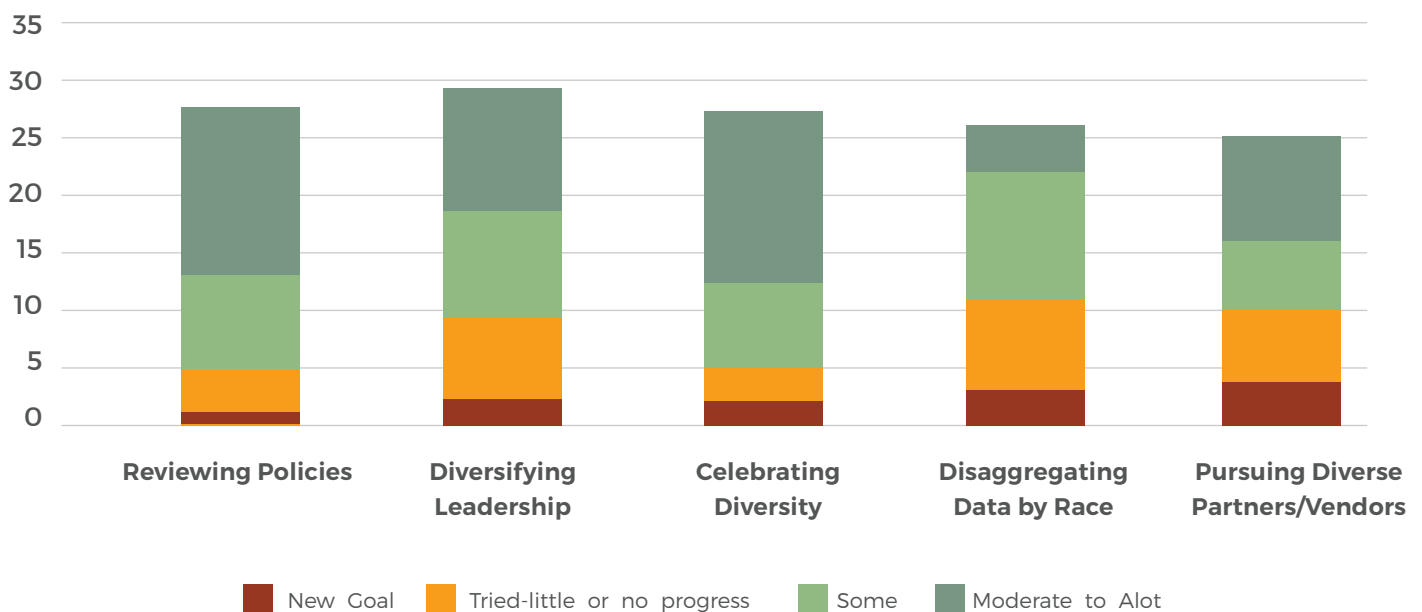


Question 2. Goal setting and Progress

While one respondent was unsure whether their organization had set specific goals, all the other respondents indicated that they had already set goals (64%) or were in the process of setting them (36%). Those still in the process of setting goals appear more likely to have received training recently.

Organizations set a range of goals, most often focusing on internal organizational development. Respondents were asked to indicate whether five common goal areas were identified within their organization, as well as the extent to which they have seen progress. Summarized in Figure 7, the number of organizations working on a goal is seen as the height of the column, and the amount of progress illustrated by the color of the bar. For example, “diversifying leadership” was the most commonly identified goal (N=29 organizations). Progress reported was mixed with 10 reporting Moderate to A lot of progress and 10 reporting some progress. Yet, seven organizations tried but made little or no progress, and two organizations have only recently set diversifying leadership as a goal.

Figure 7. Organizations setting goals and amount of progress seen



The greatest number of organizations reporting high levels of progress were those working on Reviewing Policies and Celebrating Diversity. Diversity celebration, an activity not featured in the training, was seen by the largest number of organizations making the most progress. In contrast, efforts to disaggregate organizational data by race was seen by the greatest number of respondents as leading to little or no progress.

Coach comments on their goals reflected the diversity of organizations as well as the cross-cutting themes of human resources and customer relations, organizational development, and decision making.

“Our goals are related to workplace culture, equitable compensation and workload practices, equitable hiring practices, diversifying our staff, board, and volunteers.”

“Review of hiring practices, new more open-ended job descriptions that incorporate life experiences as meeting educational criteria; review of vendors and contracts to identify opportunities to use minority firms; rethinking criteria for board membership - removing barriers to considering young professionals on a career track toward becoming part of their employer’s senior admin team”

“Currently my organization is concentrating on two projects. First a review of our employee handbook, job descriptions, and HR policies using the tools learned in this training. Secondly, we are actively working with a consultant to evaluate and recommend changes to our program lesson plans and descriptions using a DEI lens.”

“Setting up a DEIA subcommittee of the Board and a staff committee as well.”

“Our Strategic Plan relies heavily on a variety of data including more robust info on race/ethnicity of our staff/board; members/visitors; and immediate neighborhood.”

Other comments reflect the specific context or mission of the organization.

“Programming in our theatres, programming in our arts engagement and education programs, partner relationship assessment and review, hiring, board recruitment, staff development, staff retention, training, union relationships, work with NYS and national colleagues, assessment, marketing, fundraising, rentals, volunteer recruitment and training, long range and strategic planning, internal and communications, internships, language in job announcements/job descriptions, etc.”

We are structured religious organization. Our group that participated in the training is focused on growing ministry for racial healing, justice and reconciliation. We do not have direct responsibility for internal organizational policy and practice. We’re not employer/employee focused. We are currently working on an adaptive change initiative to develop capacity for racial justice work in congregations ... a culture change initiative.”

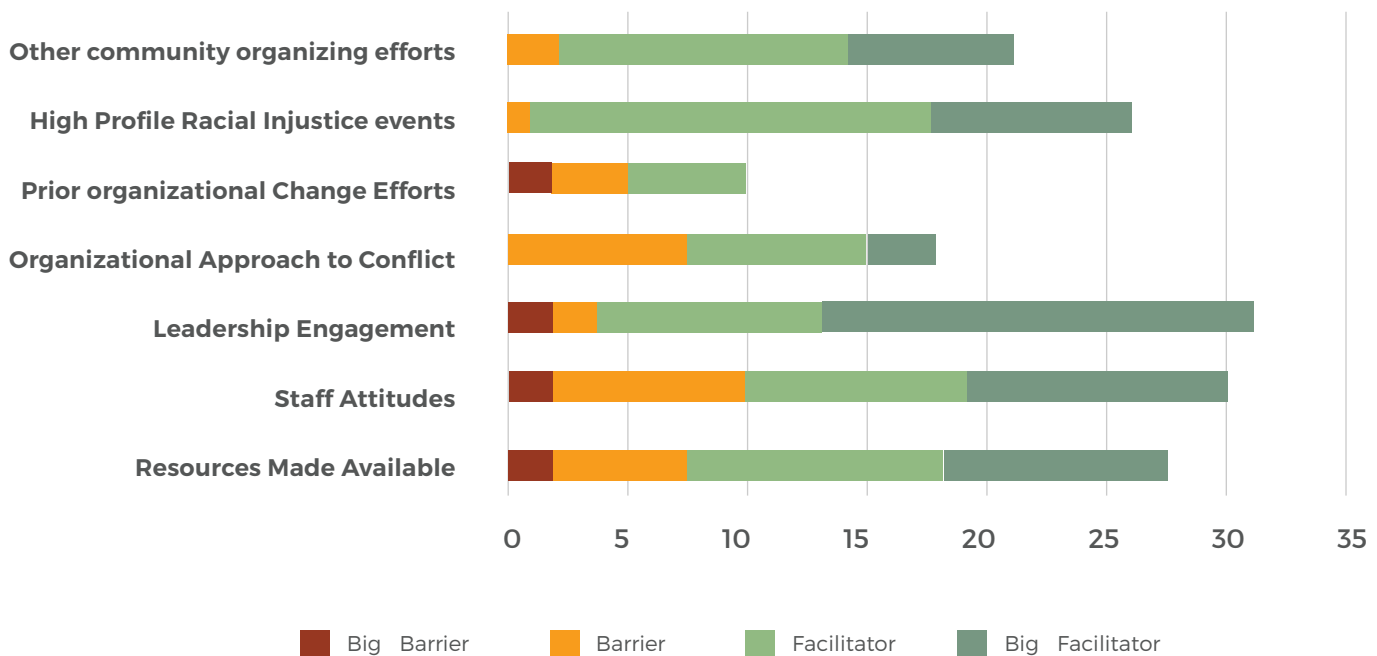
A substantial minority of respondents did not know if each of these specific goals had been set by their organization (mean=15%), raising questions about coach positioning and internal coordination and administration of change efforts.

Question 3. Facilitators and Barriers to Progress

Most respondents reported a moderately to extremely intense effort underway to achieve their goals (64%). More positively, almost all of the respondents indicated that they expect the efforts to continue or intensify in the next six months reaching at least “moderate intensity (55%) or extremely intense effort (36%). Nonetheless, given the third who reported a more modest effort, as well as the degree to which efforts were not always associated with progress, it’s important to consider factors that may either facilitate or undermine achievement of results.

To examine factors affecting progress, a number of organizational and community factors identified in prior research were listed, and respondents indicated the degree to which they may have been either barrier or facilitator. Figure 8 summarizes the responses on seven common factors. The most frequently cited factor was leadership engagement. While leader engagement was most often seen as a big facilitator, two organizations identified the lack of leader engagement as a barrier and two as a big barrier. The most often cited barriers overall were staff attitudes, resources made available, and organizational approach to conflict. Yet, all three factors were seen by more organizations as facilitators underscoring that though organizational contexts vary, concentrating supports on some of these same determinants to ensure an adequate supply can help efficiently advance organizational efforts.

Figure 8. Factors either facilitating (green) or obstructing (red/orange) progress



Community events, including the high-profile racial injustice events of 2020 and 2021 were seen as catalyzing movement forward by almost all respondents who saw them as important. As one respondent noted “increased awareness/desire/demand created during the past two years” helped facilitate the work.” Similarly, another noted “After George Floyd was killed, there was a lot of talk about what we can do as an organization to help people feel welcome and accepted.”

Several respondents noted the importance of working collaboratively as a group within and across organizations as a source of learning, inspiration, and sustaining support. Having leaders who were White take public positions also mattered. Such factors included:

“Our Equity & Diversity Council has helped to make change happen gathering like-minded individuals at different levels of the [organization].”

“Working side by side with someone you know nothing about, from a different background. Leadership commitment at both the organizational and board level.”

“The fact that other organizations were speaking up and starting or continuing to do work around DEI. Also, the dialogue with the other organizations involved in the coach training... helped because we could bounce ideas off each other. “

“...The fact that our board chair, a white woman, was enthusiastic about the training and work plan helped too.”

As mentioned, some of the same factors can interfere with the work and strengthen an inclusive culture. Such barriers included:

“Buy-in’ from decision makers (e.g., buyers that are on the front lines making purchases)”

“Limited time and resources”

“Biggest barrier is leadership not implementing REIA or ignoring suggestions when we use REIA to generate suggestions”

The pandemic was generally seen as an obstruction that derailed or slowed efforts. For instance, “COVID--managing the pandemic has meant setting aside other key initiatives. Nevertheless, we attempted to manage the pandemic with a real focus on health equity issues.”

“Accelerating progress faces many hurdles, including some directly addressed by collaborative grant funded efforts like REIAT. As another respondent summarized, efforts face “lack of knowledge, resistance to change, fear of change, fear of doing things incorrectly, making time, shifting priorities, remote work of some staff,

financial resources, finding consultants who match our needs and goals.”

While far from universal, some respondents voiced concern over the investment required to move forward and achieve greater equity at scale:

“The cost of these trainings is cost prohibitive for small and mid-sized organizations in our community. It is almost as if learning about equity has become a commodity that some cannot afford to participate in. We were very fortunate to receive a grant to participate in this impactful training, however many in the community are not and are continuing to struggle on where to even begin.”

Question 4. What lessons and suggestions do respondents draw from their experience?

Respondents articulated a number of considerations for improving the work, both through the REIAT initiative and within their organizations.

As in the past, respondents noted an unmet need for additional actionable organizational change interventions and help applying REIAT:

“I think the hardest part of the coaches’ training I am in is it not being as specific as I need to impact change in our organization. I love the resources and conversations as they have been helpful. Would like more on our specific organization and best practices to follow.”

“We also spent a lot of time in the first two sessions sharing each organization’s work thus far and left feeling like we had not gained many new actionable tools. Walkthroughs of how to use the racial equity analysis tool, back mapping, etc. would be more helpful to our organization than open discussions during trainings.”

“There was some confusion about the use of the REIA tool. The group I work with (in procurement) kept thinking this was a more appropriate tool for HR, and had difficulty applying it their work, despite the tools’ ability to be applied to any process/procedure/policy. “

“I have been very focused on metrics - what are best practice for orgs like ours. How do we go about determining baseline performance, development of strategies to impact, measurement process, goal setting etc.”

“We need concrete ways of measuring and helping, not just talk about what each organization is trying to do.”

Together, these comments echo past requests for more concrete and actionable examples of successful applications rather than descriptions of the problem, generalizations about approach, and a peer listener. Similarly, there continue to be some concerns regarding communication and the initiative's understanding of their constituency:

"More proactive and timely communications."

"There needs to be better communication from the Community Foundation. The person that was the go between organizations and the Race Matters Institute was difficult to get a hold of and often unresponsive. I also think there should be greater emphasis placed on grouping similar types of organizations together in the working sessions."

"Sessions would have been more valuable had facilitators taken the time to understand who the participants were, their professional achievements, their community commitments. At times, facilitators were preaching to the choir with a cross-section of people already deeply involved in DEI initiatives. More facilitated dialogue AMONG the participants would have been helpful."

"It seems that funders and other decision-makers are not necessarily on the same page with one another and/or they are not aware of the real challenges and complexities that organizations are working through."

While the new relationships and social support are valued by many, deepening preexisting relationships and increasing depth of instructive material on organizational change tasks and greater access to expert individualized consultation could help some:

"Need better/clearer agendas - what are goals of each meeting. Prior to closing the meeting, review progress against these goals."

"We waste a LOT of time in these meetings - every meeting we seem to start with introductions that takes far too long"

"In addition to the support at the coach trainings, it would be great to have some one-on-one at the individual organization level to work with the DEI committee and even with the board as a whole. It would be great to get some feedback on how we're doing and what we could do better that comes from someone on the "outside" who has the expertise to do so like RMI."

When asked, respondents offered a range of advice for other organizations involved in similar efforts, emphasizing the importance of being committed, courageous, focused, inclusive, and resilient.

“continue to educate, make everyone accountable and responsible”

“be diligent, patient, thoughtful, knowledgeable, create time to do the work and learn.”

“Don’t be afraid to have uncomfortable conversations. Growth happens in the discomfort”

“make small goals at first.... focus on one category.”

“It has to be an all-in, not check the box. The feedback from all areas and team members in the organization is imperative to understanding and making meaningful change. It is not a one and done, but rather we are still learning and will continue to learn everyday.”

“make a long-term commitment - this is not “one and done”. Individual organizations/businesses cannot solve societal woes, but they can chip away at the underpinnings of inequity in their community.”

No one said it was easy or that they simply have to follow a recipe to achieve greater race equity. Rather, “there is no one size fits all approach.” Instead of looking for quick fixes, organizations agree on the importance of taking “...the time to customize what feels authentic to who you are and who you want to be as an institution.”

A Closer Look at Community and Systems Change

While the primary objective of the REIAT initiative is to facilitate efforts to build more inclusive organizations, GBRRER’s theory of change is also accelerated when individual organizations choose to create or use opportunities to contribute to Race Equity beyond their own organization. Just over half (53%) of the respondents indicated that their organization had set goals of contributing to broader change. However, fully 25% of the respondents did not know whether that was a goal that their organization is planning on pursuing. Examples of these community- and systems- change approaches noted among the participating organizations include training staff so they can promote equity through their personal interactions outside the office, advocacy for changes in public serving agencies, expanding services into underserved parts of the community, and participating systems making changes within their own organizations.

While the small sample size cautions against the overinterpretation, the comments suggest a trend in which cultural/arts and education organizations may be more likely to make efforts that would impact systems change.

“Equity of access to arts instruction - we are working with our local school districts and cultural organizations in several targeted programs and more broadly on an advocacy level”

“Advocating for comprehensive early childhood system reform.”

“...have seen over 100% increase in spend with minority owned businesses in the WNY market.”

“Discussions underway on whether partnerships/collaborations with other cultural, large and small, could provide both awareness and opportunities to improve equity throughout the community - too early to assess whether this will become reality”

Four mini-case studies allowed a closer look at illustrative examples of organizations who chose to pursue four different paths to foster community- and systems-level change, including building more inclusive organizations. Each organization described below elected to focus their efforts on contributing to at least one community- or systems-level goal, as summarized in Table 2.

Case I



Evergreen Health Services provides medical, supportive, and behavioral services to individuals and families in WNY, reaching out to those living with chronic illness or who are underserved by the healthcare system. Historically rooted in the response to the AIDS crisis, the organization has expanded its services to meet the emerging needs of the community.

Engaging in the initiative first in 2019, Evergreen has made a deep and sustained commitment to addressing the roots of racial inequities both within its own structure and culture, as well as in the surrounding community. Structural changes have

unfolded in a series of steps, beginning with going beyond celebration of internal diversity, to applying REIAT to staffing and promotion. Creating a new leadership position to facilitate REIA across all departments, and subsequently elevating that position to the senior executive management team overseeing key workforce and community-facing departments (e.g., Human Resources, Marketing) proved pivotal to expanding and refining community-change activities.

Evergreen's coach identified community-based goals as a natural part of the organization's mission to meet the needs of the underserved community. Key impacts noted included the development of a broader range and increase scale of outreach services, as well as a deepened relationship with both community members and other providers and funders. In addition to the fit with mission, key facilitators of these gains include a committed and involved senior leader, the internal structural changes and culture established along the way, and the agency's willingness to extend much needed services during the pandemic -accepting the risk of non-reimbursement for supplies and services early on (e.g., remote testing sites and PPE distributions in underserved areas), and then scaling up further when funding became available. Obstacles being addressed include the challenge of maintaining the understanding, unity, and intensity of the organizational response as it grows through hiring and organizational merger and acquisition.

Case II



The Episcopal Diocese of Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania is a recently unified partnership supporting 90 congregations across 20 counties in two states. Initiated in 2018, their reorganization brings two formerly separate dioceses together to tap their respective and complementary strengths and passions.

Among their first priorities has been to promote congregants' "Pledge of Faith and Action", supporting traditional religious belief and observance as well as active engagement in addressing problems that face the broader community. Racial inequity has been identified as one of these priorities, resulting in the entry of this umbrella organization into the REIAT initiative in 2020.

Their primary equity goal was to build their own capacity to strengthen constituent congregations' capacity to take action and apply REIAT, penetrating deeper into the broader community through each local congregation and institution. However, they soon encountered significant obstacles related to building "readiness among congregations to do the work". Foremost was the mismatch between REIAT participants and their opportunity to demonstrate the value of the work: while the Diocese representatives were committed and resourceful, they lacked access to congregation data and the standing to persuade local leaders who had other pressing demands competing for their attention. Other obstacles included the pandemic's disruption of in-person services and regular communication. More positively, they found some of the training content very helpful in understanding and making in-roads to get on local agendas even in the face of the pandemic. Other facilitators included redirecting race equity efforts to integrate them alongside other diocese initiatives focused on adaptive change management that were in fact getting traction. Other facilitators and interim successes that may lay groundwork for further progress included practicing inclusive and participatory change strategies, developing compelling and values-resonant symbols for outreach, and establishing ongoing conversations with congregation level representatives.

Case III

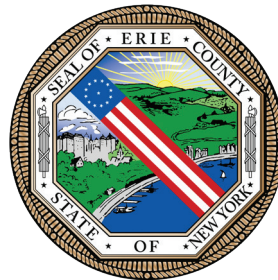


Lift Off WNY is a coalition that works with existing organizations and initiatives to ensure readiness for kindergarten. A coalition composed of early childhood funders and thought leaders from all community sectors, Lift Off's mission focuses on promoting high quality early childhood developmental services integrating improved policy, practice, research, and resources. Advocacy to increase resources and access is seen as integral to reduce differential impact. Their vision for "all children" benefiting from such improvements aligns tightly with the concerns of racial disparities and children and families at risk of being left behind. Lift Off's current advocacy agenda includes three priorities: affordable and accessible care, services to support special needs remediation, and transportation supports - all concerns that are seen as disproportionately impacting communities of color.

Joining the initiative training in 2020, the Liftoff Executive Director brought extensive experience with general operations, racial equity data, and organizational change. From the start, her interest was in using the training to engage the leadership of coalition organizations in order to strengthen advocacy. Key activities reflecting systems change have included recurrent events, interactions such as ongoing meetings among coalition members focused on racial equity, as well as advocacy wins related to regulatory change and resource allocation. While gains have been made in helping coalition member organization board members recognize and apply their individual influence, this remains a focus going forward.

Cited strategies which facilitated progress include the alignment of goals, training, and mission, as well as Liftoff staff expertise and the commitment of its coalition members. Challenges to getting the most from training opportunities include the use of remote platforms apparently unfamiliar to trainers and trainees early in the pandemic, and the difficulty of establishing trusting relationships through remote connections regardless of the facility of the presenters. When the trainers seemed overstretched and slow responding to requests, the Liftoff team initiated their own internal peer group which has proven a very successful adaptation that continues to help maintain focus and extend coalition engagement.

Case IV



The experience of Erie County government represents the most direct path to systems change. In fact, Erie County Government has been an early and active participant in the initiative, led by a public commitment from the County Executive's office. Since sending trainees in the first years of the initiative, the county has continued to send agency leads to coach training, and to bring in both REIAT and other training into multiple County agencies. Over 10 County leaders have participated in coach training in the last two years alone.

The County respondent saw a cascading flow of changes in county government as integral to making "foundational cultural" changes that have systemic results. Among the largest steps forward was the County Executive's integration of REIA in his three-year "Live Well Erie" plan. The county now uses REIA in reviewing and updating work plans, policies and procedures in many departments. While often out

of public view, applications of REIA during the County's response to the pandemic and during the intensified public scrutiny associated with the George Floyd shooting raised the profile of both the tool and County's practice which may contribute to a change in the broader public narrative concerning the acknowledgement and remediation of racial inequities.

Strategies that facilitated the county's changes include the commitment and active involvement of senior leaders across county government, participation in the REIAT and augmented training and consultation in many departments. The pandemic and racial tensions in the community, while disruptive, were also seen as opportunities to accelerate application of the REIA. Sensitive data reviews and invitations of community voice were closely followed by high profile actions-based on the REIA and community input, speeding trust building and subsequent application in other areas of functioning. Challenges remain in the sheer size of County government. Moreover, the effort to institutionalize the values, comfort, and commitment beyond current senior leadership faces headwinds as the effort to train career civil servants continues to face stiff competition for time and attention in a busy government setting.

Cross-cutting Trends

Despite a lack of random selection and limitations in scope that warrant caution, consistent patterns within and across these experiences point to several key factors. Paralleling the facilitators of participant progress noted above, these facilitators should be considered further when using REIAT to support community- and systems-change, as well as individual organizational change:

- *close alignment between organizational mission and community- or systems-change goals*
- *explicit, public, and consistent support from executive leadership*
- *thoughtful internal organization of the effort to broaden and sustain engagement*
- *coaches experienced with Race Equity issues, organizational change and use of data*
- *establishing readiness and engaging internal staff at multiple organizational levels*
- *inclusion of community voice, and public demonstration of the impact of REIA*
- *organizational risk tolerance, use of disruptive community events that create opportunities for new response and trust building around community priorities*

These interviewees described the REIAT training as only moderately helpful in supporting their particular community or systems change activities. None of the coaches in these organizations felt well-positioned to judge, though as they said that they were not closely involved in the current on-going coaching community. Some found the materials posted on the Slack channel as helpful but regretted that they had either exhausted what was available or found the offerings dated or obsolete. Another common comment was that providing additional and public examples of successful organizational, community- and systems-change would help them in their work.

Table 2. Illustrative Examples of Organizations working on Community and Systems Change

	Evergreen Health	Episcopal Dioceses	Liftoff WNY	Erie County
Sector	Non-Profit/Service	Faith	Non-Profit/Advocacy	Government
Goals	Meet unmet service needs, prevent disparities in health outcomes	Engaging congregants in action promoting RE in their communities	Change regulations, legislation, resource allocation to address RE	Standardize the use of REIA in evaluation and planning
Primary Activities	Extending services and supports at greater scale	Engaging and building congregation capacity	Advocacy, strengthening influence among coalition	Culture change; Institutionalizing changes
Progress Description	Good but work remains	Not ready for REIA	Good but work remains	Good but work remains
Examples of Impact	Increased volume, range of services; addressed critical needs in crisis; broadened network.	Informed adaptation of other organizational initiatives. Refocused on “readiness” building.	Regulatory and legislative changes; developed peer group among funders; activated new advocates.	Extensive agency practice, policy and procedure changes; public engagement.
Facilitators	Mission alignment; executive leadership engagement; GBRRER and other training; experienced staffing; internal changes and culture; investment/risk tolerance.	Mission alignment; training in adaptive management; processing lack of traction; connection to other initiatives already moving forward among target congregations and consistent with their preferences and priorities.	Mission alignment, executive leadership and board composition and engagement; initial GBRRER training; experienced staff; mutual trust and confidence.	Mission alignment, executive leadership, middle manager, public engagement; GBRRER training and other training; cascading successful applications; experienced staff; public demonstrations of success.

[con't on next page]

Table 2. (Continued)

	Evergreen Health	Episcopal Dioceses	Liftoff WNY	Erie County
Obstacles	Crises in community, ongoing resource needs.	Lack of readiness among congregations, lack of access to data and leverage among coaches.	Reticence among board members to use their influence, tap their networks.	Size and scope of organization; reaching beyond leadership.
Insights and Implications	Focus first on internal change; its essential to external impact.	Match organizations with supports; train to help coaches build readiness	Invest funding, tailor training for advocacy organizations, boards	Support efforts to measure and track progress.

What's Next? Key Implications for Planning and Refinement

Among the most consistent trends in the feedback from coaches is the sense that they are making progress, but lots of work remains. Respondents see the training and perhaps to a less consistent extent, the coaching supports as important to foster additional impact. Their input includes encouraging signs that the training and support adjustments are aiming for contents and processes valued by participating organizations. Moreover, the involvement of many organizations participating in other GBREER initiatives as well as those seeing community- or systems-change goals is consistent with GBREER's overall theory of change. This positive feedback and ongoing progress is no less impressive in the face of the disruptive pandemic, racial upheaval associated with George Floyd, and other chronic community crises. Changes made to the protocol appear helpful, enabling coaches to better sustain organizational efforts and even turn crises from potential distractions to opportunities for progress.

At the same time, coach responses echo lingering concerns about the lack of relevant instructive examples tailored to their context, shortage of public awareness building, and delayed, inconsistent, or incomplete communications by the initiative. The exploration of a small group of organizations working on broader community and systems change goals raises the bar for a more effective and innovative responses. Strengthening REIAT implementation should involve continuing the adjustments underway and perhaps adapting the cohort approach, while building a staffing plan more robust to disruptions that appear to continue to compromise continuity of relationship, trust, communications, sustained engagement on long term issues, and mutual accountability.

Recommendations

1 Continue to focus on implementation improvements targeted in earlier adaptation

There is striking alignment on facilitators of progress across the e-survey and the mini-case studies. Leadership engagement, commitment, and structured planning are seen as critical ingredients. Taking the time to work with organizational leaders to understand the commitment they are making, select coaches positioned to lead change, and develop action plans appears well spent. At the same time, a few respondents remain concerned about timely and consistent communication regarding training and coaching opportunities. Larger numbers continue to request more actionable and more public examples of successful applications of REIA that are more easily transferred to their particular setting. The current emphasis at the GBRRER to increase public awareness may help address some of the organizations' concerns.

2 Consider further engagement of organizations within peer cohorts

It may be helpful to consider whether a cohort of public agencies, for profit industry peers or religious organizations be useful for deepening engagement, economical incorporation of more applicable and actionable examples, and sustaining action. There are suggestions that the homogeneous grouping in terms of their organization sector and mission, as well as the presence of preexisting familiarity with other trainees would be conducive to greater learning and perseverance. However, extra care should be taken to ensure that cohort composition avoids reproducing racialized inequities that may already manifest in networks and preexisting relationships. Rather, composition can be an opportunity to address these divides.

3 Consider expanding community and systems change focus, concentrating efforts with REIAT

Nearly half of the organizational coaches described some community- or systems-level change goals. Perhaps not surprisingly given the focus of training, their descriptions of progress contributing to community and systems change tended to be less concrete and compelling as their work internally. Four mini-case studies examined some of the most common paths chosen to promote broader change and point to some of the active ingredients in preparing for and achieving community and systems change.

Initiative staff and the GBRRER overall may wish to consider how the REIAT can be crafted to recruit more organizations with broader community and systems change missions, and use the training/coaching regimen to support their efforts. For instance, developing a training cohort from among organizations with a strong

advocacy mission and/or those already involved in other GBRER activities may be a way to foster engagement and promote more specific collaborative action. It may be helpful to explore this further with coaches currently working on community- or systems-impact.

The challenges to facilitating community- and systems-level change may also be addressed by intensifying the supports available to a smaller number of organizations most ready to use them. Rather than continuing to try to train the largest possible number of organizations at the expense of sustained support and accountability, the Roundtable may want to concentrate limited resources and focus attention on (a) smaller number of the most effective, visible, and influential organizations, and (b) those organizations deepest in the facilitating factors noted on p. 18. A more modest number of informative and inspiring stories may still reach a critical mass and yield more long-term benefits both directly and through empowering on-going public awareness and narrative change activities with authentic, meaningful, and compelling success stories.

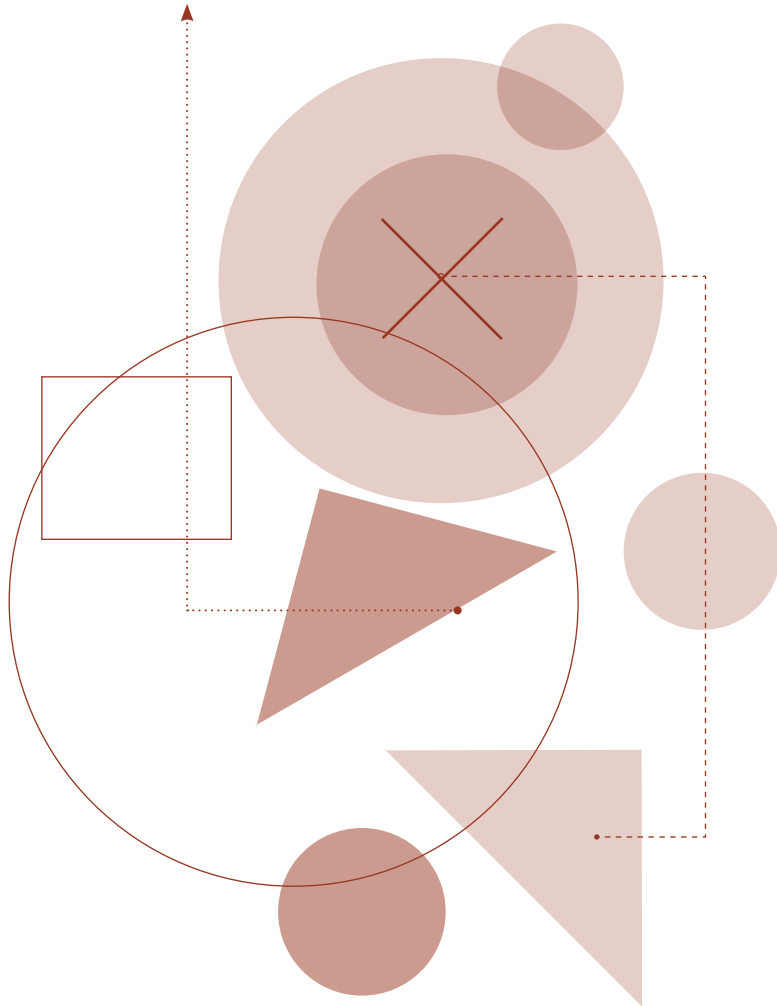
4 Look more closely to understand the “not sures” and “don’t knows” What does it mean when a sizable minority of respondents who are unsure of whether their organization had participated in a particular training or set a particular goal? Is it a matter of language and names unfamiliar or inconsistent? Is the coach positioning not optimal to remain informed or is turnover very high? Is it just hard to know the breadth of what’s going on in these organizations? A mix of all?

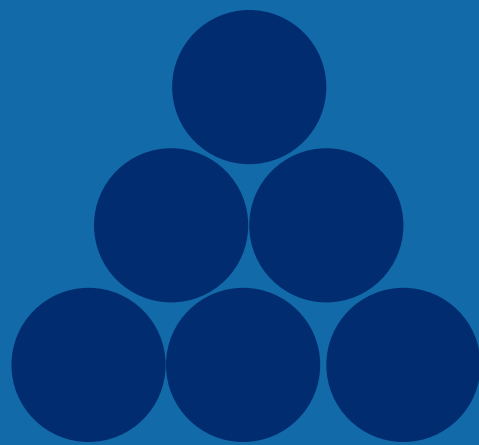
While the roots of the issue are ambiguous and there may be a role for low profile goal setting, the questions are no less important to the model refinement and impact: explicit, consistent, and public goal setting can sustain effort, increase accountability and inform decision making, amplify narrative change, facilitate continuing and inclusive conversation, and ultimately enhance impact. If goals are set and inform organizational operations, yet the coach is uninformed, their capacity to contribute and champion may be undermined unnecessarily.

Other Caveats and Limitations

The generalization and confidence in any conclusions discussed here is limited by the modest response rate, the use of purposeful sampling, and the depth of the interviews. Two potential partial remedies include:

- (a) making these tentative conclusions the topics of conversation at a coaching support session*
- (b) formalizing documentation of work plans further both to facilitate clarity, commitment and follow through, as well as to help understand more clearly where there is traction and where support is needed.*





**Youth Employment
Coalition**

Summary

The Buffalo Youth Employment Coalition (YEC) was convened in July 2020 and, in approximately two years, has made considerable progress along what is now an established development process for GBRER coalitions: mapping the system (collecting data to understand existing resources and gaps in 2019), collective learning, planning, and implementation from 2020 to date. The YEC brings together nearly all of the organizations involved in or connected with youth employment in the Buffalo region with a plan for coordinating and increasing access to these services. Progress continues toward creating a physical and virtual hub where young people can access employment-related services and a data dashboard for tracking youth employment activities. There are opportunities for messaging how this infrastructure will build the capacity of organizations that connect young people with employment opportunities, centering youth voice in decision making and adding additional staff support.

Methods

The YEC report is based on a review of documents including meeting notes, the action plan and other reports, and interviews with 5 individuals involved with the leadership of the YEC. We fielded a survey February 9-17, 2022 (see Appendix I) to all YEC members. After the initial request, YEC members were sent five reminders, including two from the YEC project manager. Of 61 possible respondents, 30 completed the survey, a response rate of 48%. Participants preferred to complete the survey anonymously; 14 shared their organization and 11 shared their organizational role.

Background

The goal of the YEC is to build a more coordinated and equitable youth employment system in Greater Buffalo that supports 16-24-year-olds along pathways to family-sustaining careers. Under the guidance of the GBRER, in 2019, the Community Foundation convened a working group with members from the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Say Yes Buffalo, and the John R. Oishei Foundation to address youth employment. They commissioned a report from the Center for Government Research to map the youth employment system and better understand barriers to youth employment in the Buffalo Region. According to the

January 2020 report, there is lack of coordination between organizations serving in the youth employment sector, with youth and service providers are confused about what resources are available and how to connect to these resources. The solution was to convene a cross-sector youth employment coalition that includes Buffalo region organizations contributing to, and with a stake in youth employment.

The YEC first met in July 2020 and co-created a goal of creating pathways to family-sustaining careers for young people ages 16-24 living in Greater Buffalo. Between August 2020 and May 2021, the YEC members participated in collaborative learning and joined four working groups to identify the goals and action plan for each of what would become the five pillars of the YEC: addressing data needs, youth engagement, employer/industry engagement and moving from programs to pathways (i.e., making sure youth are being supported to enter and progress in careers in growth industries) and a youth apprenticeship program. With support and guidance from Nancy Martin Consulting, a consulting group with 25 years of experience working on youth employment, the working groups spent eight months creating the YEC's action plan, a set of goals and strategies to be implemented over the subsequent 3 years.

In July 2021, the Community Foundation convened a steering committee of members from within the YEC who would focus on implementing the action plan. The working group co-chairs and other interested members of the YEC were invited to join. Currently, the committee has 21 members in addition to Community Foundation and Nancy Martin Consulting staff. Meetings include updates on progress related to each of the pillars. An event that shaped the direction of the YEC is that it was invited to join the Aspen Institute's Opportunity Youth Forum in Spring 2021 which helped to sharpen the YEC's focus on opportunity youth.

The Youth Employment Coalition is different from other youth employment initiatives in Buffalo

As of May 2022, the YEC has more than 69 members representing 35 organizations. There was unanimous agreement from interviewees that the YEC is innovative because it is attempting to coordinate, for the first time, the many partners involved in youth employment in Buffalo: "we're all coordinated and working toward one goal." Another interviewee reflected, "Another said that the YEC is different because of, "the sheer number of agencies and organizations that have come together."

Interviewees noted that it was important that the YEC was convened by a funder – the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. "It's a collaboration among funders and community partners," where "donors listen directly to community partners and meet their needs." Having a foundation convene the YEC made it easier to establish initial funding for YEC efforts because foundation leadership was able to secure several major philanthropic investments to fund the first three years of the project

and, “having the funding eliminated a lot of naysayers.” Working groups were asked to come up with innovative goals regardless of cost, with the Foundation president and CEO telling them to, “dream big, and I’ll find the funding.”

Finally, the YEC is prioritizing racial equity and the needs of youth of color. It has the goal of simultaneously engaging more youth of color and among the employer engagement pillar goals, helping employers eliminate systemic racism that prevents youth of color from being hired and advancing. One interviewee noted that what is “important about this pipeline is it has equity lens built into it.”

The YEC organizational structure

The resource team is the YEC’s leadership team and includes the Community Foundation CEO/president and a program officer, the three YEC co-chairs; two members of Nancy Martin Consulting, and a part-time project coordinator whose primary responsibility is coordinating meetings and communication.

All members of the YEC were invited to join the steering committee that oversees the implementation of the action plan. The steering committee and the entire YEC itself meet on alternating months. YEC meetings are primarily used for collective learning to help all YEC members adopt a common frame of reference (e.g., learning about how other communities are approaching youth employment, learning about opportunity youth, framing asset-based narratives for change, and learning about trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches to working with youth, families and community).

The consulting group, Nancy Martin Consulting, was hired to provide overall guidance to YEC leadership, facilitate the creation of the action plan and track progress toward its goals. To begin the action planning process, they interviewed all the members of the YEC about opportunities and barriers to youth employment and member organization needs, and this informed the remainder of the action planning process. Although Nancy Martin Consulting has been transferring more of the YEC and steering committee meeting facilitation responsibility to the YEC co-chairs over time, they remain active in planning meeting agendas and providing some meeting facilitation. They support the resource team, advise the YEC on strategy and implementation, and connect the YEC with other communities engaged in similar work. The consultants, who are based in the Washington D.C. area, reflected that coming from outside Buffalo had an advantage of allowing them to be perceived as more neutral and that YEC members might feel more comfortable confiding their concerns with them than consultants from Buffalo. An unforeseen role of the consultant group has been working with contracted organizations to align their services with the YEC plan (e.g., helping to bring the SUNY Erie hub proposal to fruition, providing guidance to the Say Yes data dashboard team). They have also surveyed the data collection practices of agencies involved in youth employment to inform the dashboard planning.

Strengths of the YEC organizational structure and areas for improvement

Leadership

The efforts of the YEC are championed by a persuasive leader with a vision for the organization's impact and the ability to use the Community Foundation to bring partners to the table and channel their commitment and resources. The Community Foundation has leaned on messaging about the unmet need and evidence that, "it's necessary work" to engage partners. Testimonials about the impact of the work on people's lives have energized the group. As one interviewee said, "you hear somehow you are positively impacting someone's life, that energy just kicks back in, and you know that your time is being well spent."

Program support

Administrative implementation support is currently limited to a part-time individual at a partner organization whose role is primarily scheduling and supporting meetings and coordinating communication within the YEC. This role is being transitioned to a Community Foundation staff member. Some interviewees noted that the YEC could benefit from additional administrative and implementation support. They recommended a full-time coordinator take on roles in addition to coordinating meetings, including more follow-up with partners and contracted organizations to ensure shared understanding of goals and follow-through. This person could invest in creating relationships and supporting the different groups that have taken on the YEC agenda. As more parts of the YEC plan are implemented, this person could facilitate frequent and open communication with partnering workforce development agencies. In the interim, Nancy Martin Consulting may be able to provide additional support.

Functional Redundancy

Having organizations co-lead pillars turned out to be fortuitous in the example of the pathways pillar and may be a strategy for enhancing accountability and progress. The hub contract was originally awarded to SUNY Erie, but when it became clear that the community college was experiencing significant financial distress, it became clear that the SUNY Erie would not be able to be the hiring agency for the HUB because of expected layoffs. The Service Collaborative had already been collaborating with SUNY Erie on the pillar and the Community Foundation decided to move three years of grant funding to this second organization, to run the hub. The Service Collaborative already has a workforce and leadership training program for opportunity youth. The model of shared leadership meant that it was relatively easy to shift primary responsibility for the hub to a new organization.

Engagement and Inclusion

Member Engagement

Interviewees described YEC members as moderately engaged, with a smaller group that is highly engaged. A response rate of 48% to the survey supports this observation. In addition, for most survey questions, 3-5 respondents answered “don’t know,” suggesting that they might not have been involved enough to appraise, for example, whether “most members are contributing time and resources to the YEC” or “the YEC is on track to meet the goals for the first year of its 3 year plan.”

Meeting evaluation surveys indicate that the meetings are perceived as valuable. Nancy Martin Consulting leads the meeting planning processes and is intentional about creating meeting experiences that are valuable to members. They create opportunities for members to get to know one another, provide input on decision making, opportunities for learning, and limit time devoted to report-outs.

Lack of transparency in decision making can undermine engagement in organizations. Attempts are being made by the resource team to function transparently and attention should continue to be paid to this consideration. Members of the resource team who we interviewed perceived the YEC as transparent, with ample communication about opportunities and updates. They perceived the open invitations to participate in the steering committee, working groups, or other sub-committees as a defining characteristic of the YEC. It is hoped these open calls build trust and engagement. One interviewee said, when it is an, “open process... the more ownership they will take.” That said, there were three unprompted comments to open-ended questions on the survey suggesting the not all members of the YEC experienced membership and decision making as transparent. For example, “I feel there needs to be an added layer of transparency in decision making.” Another person commented, “I think the workgroups should be more collaborative and also more transparent.” Although significant efforts are being made to be transparent about decision making, to the extent that some partners might receive a contract or be asked to provide a service and others are not, this may be a source of some tension.

Progress

Most of the interviewees wanted to articulate that what the YEC was trying to achieve was impressive, that “these are big lifts.” “It’s ambitious and the timeline is ambitious.” Some trial and error will be necessary as the group attempts to coordinate across agencies and effect systems change. “We’re trying to do something that’s never been before; I expect mistakes.” Trying to advance all five pillars at the same time would necessarily mean that some moved forward more easily than others and as a whole, the progress made on the action plan was considerable.

Survey results indicate that YEC members identified and believe in a common set of goals (Table 3). The project coordinator, with input from Nancy Martin Consulting updates a progress report bi-monthly. See Table 3 for a summary of progress toward

the YEC's five pillars. There may be slight apprehension that progress has not been swift enough during the first year of implementing the YEC plan as survey results indicated that members were largely, but not unanimously, positive about the YEC's progress. Indeed, significant progress has been made with respect to three pillars, and less for youth engagement which had planned to create a youth advisory council and employer engagement which had planned to pilot partnerships and culture change with a group of employers (see Table 3).

Table 3. Youth Employment Coalition Progress

Pillar	Organizational Lead	Within 2-3 years	Progress
<p>DATA</p> <p>Use data to understand, track, and monitor progress on the YEC's goal</p>	<p>Say Yes Buffalo</p>	<p>Create a data dashboard of key youth employment indicators with input from service providers to tracking training offerings, outcomes, barriers and gaps and serve as a basis for constant improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - options for metrics identified - survey of metrics already being collected by agencies
<p>YOUTH ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Engage young people throughout the process of developing, informing, and implementing YEC goals and strategies</p>	<p>Was CoNECT now transitioning to the Service Collaborative</p>	<p>Create a youth advisory council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Held youth forum; gained input on hub - 3 youth focus groups held by Vantage Point to inform digital platform
<p>EMPLOYER/ INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Employers in growth industries offer young people internship and entry-level positions and pathways for advancement</p>	<p>Buffalo Niagara Partnership</p>	<p>Identify employer partners committed to developing youth as a key source of talent and building work environments in which youth can thrive and advance</p>	
<p>PROGRAMS TO PATHWAYS</p> <p>Youth ages 16-24 access pathways into family-sustaining careers</p>	<p>SUNY Erie was to host the hub; this is being transitioned to the Service Collaborative</p>	<p>Create brick and mortar hub and digital platform to connect youth to career pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -hub space identified at SUNY Erie -hub positions posted -survey of existing programs completed -Vendor (Vantage Point) identified to build digital platform through a competitive process; they have started profiling youth users
<p>YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP*</p> <p>*program is not a YEC initiative but is aligned with the YEC</p>	<p>New America, Say Yes Buffalo</p>	<p>Launch a multi-sector youth apprenticeship Pilot</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -8 employers engaged -employer onboarding started

Challenges to Progress

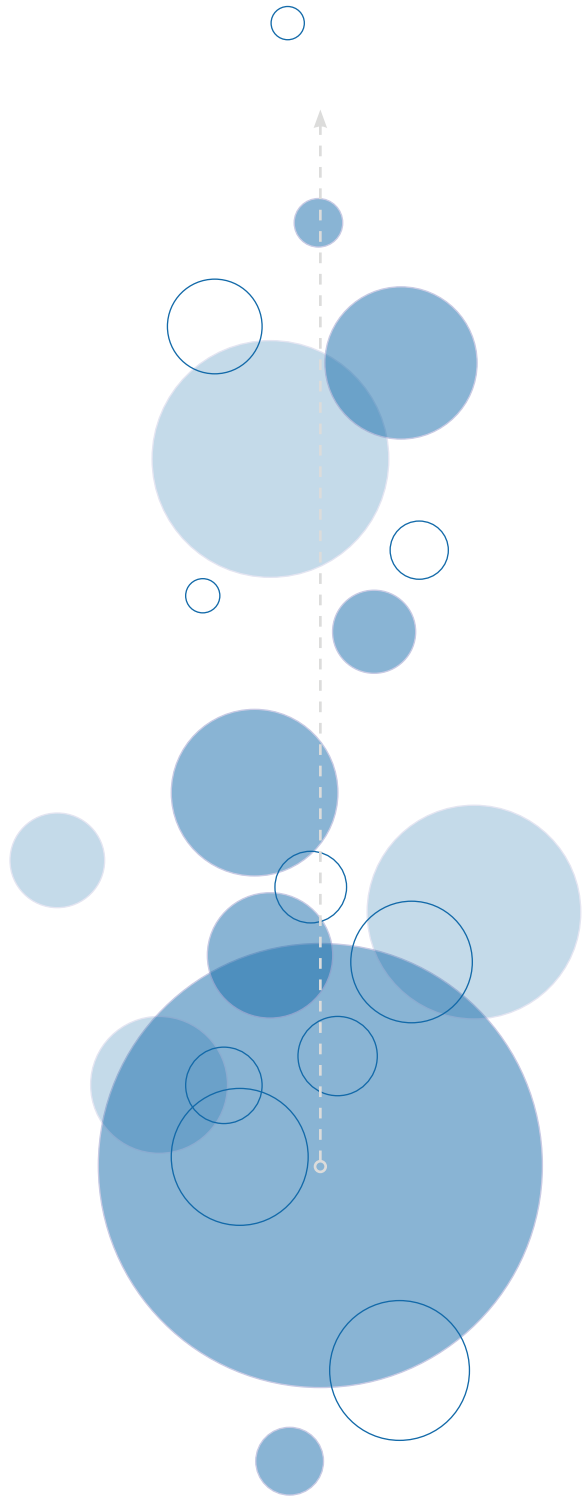
Youth and Employer Engagement

The YEC is attempting to deepen connections and collaboration between three groups – youth and employers and youth employment service providers. In February 2021, the youth engagement work group hosted a virtual community youth forum to obtain youth feedback on the YEC action plan. There is agreement that this was effective at creating a better understanding of what youth want to see in the hub. Another step was including Sherman Webb-Middlebrooks, a near peer previously with a leadership role in the Community Network for Engagement, Connection and Transformation (CoNECT) and now the director of youth development for The Foundry, as a YEC co-chair. Given his extensive experience as a service provider to youth and facilitator of youth engagement, he brings an important perspective to the resource team and YEC leadership. Vantage Point, the firm contracted to create the digital platform, conducted focus groups with youth and agencies to gather input on the content of the site. The Community Foundation is engaged in discussion with the Service Collaborative to restart the activities of the youth engagement pillar. There is widespread acknowledgement that youth engagement is difficult, yet a persistent theme across meetings notes and the survey data was a desire to continue to find ways of centering youth voices in the YEC. It will be challenging to get the word out about the hubs and the Community Foundation is planning a large scale multi channel messaging campaign to engage youth in the physical and virtual hubs.

The employer/industry engagement pillar of the YEC action plan appears less concrete in terms of next steps than the other pillars. The goals are to identify and partner with businesses to both cultivate interest in hiring youth, but also effect culture change within these organizations in order to make them better places for youth, especially youth of color, to work and advance. As one interviewee noted, “there’s some changes that need to be made on both ends.” (both the employee and employer ends) Greater resources and energy will need to be invested in this pillar as the YEC continues to pursue its action plan. As with the pathways pillar it may be helpful for more than one organization to lead this pillar.

Recommendations

- 1** Consider investing in a full-time project director, not dissimilar to the BPI project manager, whose sole responsibility is to the YEC. Staff with other responsibilities may not be able to devote adequate time to the YEC. It would lay the groundwork for shifting some responsibilities from the consultants to a staff person who might provide long-term stability in YEC leadership and build institutional knowledge.
- 2** Continue to reimagine youth engagement and employer engagement. These are challenging undertakings and valuable lessons have been learned. The resource team might strategize ways additional agencies could contribute in a coordinated way to these two pillars. Perhaps members of the working groups could reconvene to strategize new approaches. It may be productive to revisit approaches shown to be successful in other communities. When the timing is appropriate, business leaders from the GBRER may be able to support employer engagement.
- 3** Attracting youth to the hub will require an investment in a long-term messaging campaign. Timing of the campaign would need to be coordinated so that there were proven programs for youth to enter when they connect with the hub. It will be important to plan to market on an ongoing basis to continue to attract new recruits. This is likely to be a significant cost that needs to be sustained. Consideration may be given to partnering with the justice system and street outreach to reach some opportunity youth.
- 4** Continue to message to partners how the work of the YEC is both distinct from, and supports the work they are doing in their organizations; i.e., that the YEC is not a competitor. The Community Foundation might regularly message to partners how the YEC initiatives will build their capacity. Partners may worry that the YEC could reduce their access to youth and funding, for example, if the hub does not refer youth equitably across organizations. This fear may be particularly acute because organizations are aware that they will soon be submitting outcome data to the data dashboard that will track youth employment outcomes for the region. It will be important to monitor for dissatisfaction among partners as the hub begins operations.
- 5** Create a sustainability plan and socialize it with members so they understand how YEC activities will be funded, reducing apprehension that the YEC activities could divert funding from their organizations.
- 6** Build in leadership redundancy. When it was necessary to transition leadership of the hub, the fact that two organizations had been collaborating on the pathways pillar made this a much quicker process with minimal disruption to the YEC progress. This could be a good model for other pillars that are not currently co-led.





Appendices

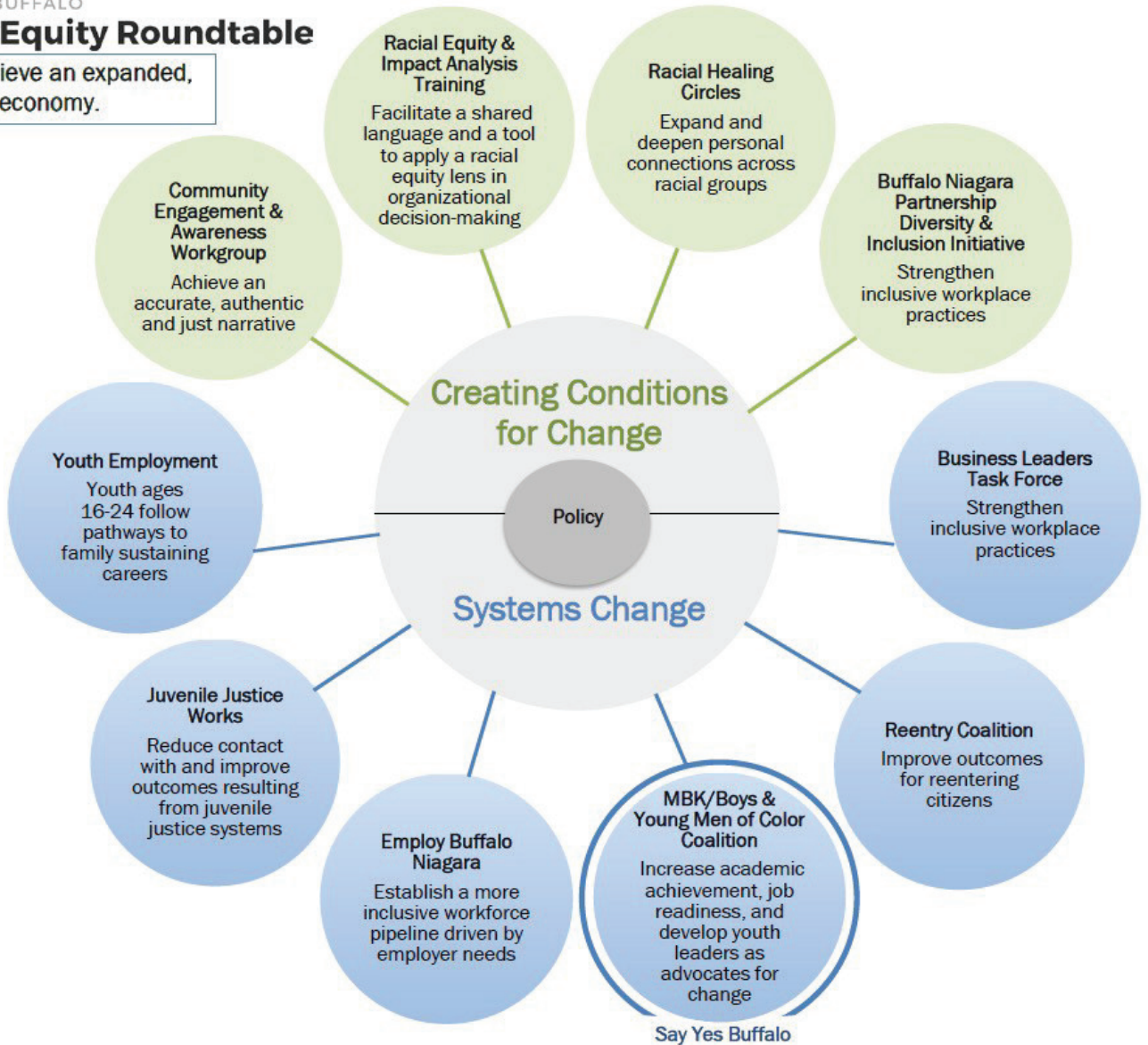
Appendix A

Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable Coalition/Initiative Structure

GREATER BUFFALO

Racial Equity Roundtable

Goal: Achieve an expanded, inclusive economy.



www.RacialEquityBuffalo.org

Appendix B

GBRER 2022 Evaluation Survey Questions

The goal of this survey is to understand the influence of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER) and your participation in the GBRER in creating an inclusive economy in the Buffalo region. This survey is designed for members of the GBRER or for representatives of members who have attended GBRER meetings on behalf of a GBRER member. All responses to this survey will remain confidential and will only be viewed by the CCNY evaluation team and select members of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

Please respond to each of the following questions briefly and concisely. Your confidential responses are crucial to advancing important racial equity work and we sincerely appreciate your time and effort.

Questions about your organization

In this survey “your organization” refers to the primary organization(s) that you are involved with in the community.

1. **Due to your involvement in the GBRER, has your awareness expanded about resources around racial equity (e.g.: connection to community relationships, knowledge, financial opportunities related to the work, etc.)?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

2. **Did any of these resources help your organization advance its racial equity work?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

3. **3A. “Yes”: Please briefly describe these resources and how they helped advance your organization’s racial equity work?**

4. **3B. “No” or “Unsure”: Please briefly take a moment to describe why you selected “No” or “Unsure.”**

5. **Below is a list of GBRER initiatives. How much impact do you think they have had on the lives of people of color in the Buffalo region to date?**

	Major impact	Moderate impact	Minor impact	No impact	I am not fully informed about the initiative and cannot assess impact.
GBRER support for police reform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buffalo Purchasing Initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service Link Stop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WBFO Racial Equity Project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buffalo Niagara Partnership diversity and inclusion exchange (peer-to-peer facilitated groups for executives)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buffalo Niagara Partnership diversity and inclusion academy (4 class program in D&I for executives)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employ Buffalo Niagara	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boys and Men of Color initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial healing circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial impact analysis trainings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. If you would like to to make comments about any initiatives not listed above, please do so here briefly:

7. We are interested in the ripple-effects of the GBRER. In the past year, how many projects or initiatives have you been involved in (that are NOT part of the GBRER as listed in the previous question) but ARE a result of your involvement in the GBRER?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+

8. If you answered “1” or more in the previous question: Please briefly describe the project(s)/initiative(s) you are involved in by telling us:

- a) Initiative’s title
- b) Who are the partners involved
- c) The initiative’s goals
- d) What resources your organization has contributed to the initiative

Questions about your experiences in the GBRER

9. To what extent has the GBRER given you tools to be a change-agent for racial equity work in your organization?
- A great deal
 - Somewhat
 - A little
 - None at all
10. Please briefly describe changes you have helped bring about in your organization that have made it more racially inclusive.
11. Since you first became a member of the GBRER, how much has your understanding of systemic racism increased?
- A great deal
 - Somewhat
 - A little
 - None at all
12. Please briefly describe the most important things you have learned about systemic racism as a result of your involvement in the GBRER.
13. How confident are you that you can communicate a business case for creating a more inclusive economy in the Buffalo region?
- Very confident
 - Moderately confident
 - Slightly confident
 - Not at all confident
14. How successfully have you persuaded others in your organization that there is a business case for a more inclusive economy?
- Very successfully
 - Moderately successfully
 - Slightly successfully
 - Not at all successfully
 - I have not had the opportunity
15. How successfully have you argued a business case for a more inclusive economy to people outside of your organization?
- Very successfully
 - Moderately successfully
 - Slightly successfully
 - Not at all successfully
 - I have not had the opportunity
16. The goal of the GBRER is to promote an inclusive economy in the Buffalo region. Briefly describe any recommendations you have for the GBRER to help it achieve this goal.
17. What opportunities do you think exist to more effectively (or more quickly) dismantle systemic racism in the Buffalo region? Feel free to briefly answer this question with respect to systems with which you are most familiar or to answer it more broadly.

Impacts of recent events

18. How pleased are you with the progress/successes of the GBRER?

- Very pleased
- Moderately pleased
- Slightly pleased
- Not at all pleased

19. How confident are you in the ability of the group to impact community/systems change?

- Very confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

20. Do you plan on remaining in the GBRER?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

21. Have you taken part in a racial equity impact analysis training?

- Yes
- No

22. Taking part in the Racial Impact Analysis Training (REIAT, REIA Training):

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Not Applicable / Dont' know
...made me prioritize equity work in my professional role(s).					
... gave the GBRER a common language for discussing and understanding racial equality.					
... did NOT impact my practices related to racial equity.					
... made me more effective at promoting racial equity in my place of employment.					

23. To what extent did the Racial Impact Analysis Training (REIAT, REIA Training) help you in understanding how to influence others in your organization to further racial equity?

- Not helpful at all
- Slightly helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Very helpful
- Not applicable / don't know

24. To what extent did the Racial Impact Analysis Training (REIAT, REIA Training) help you in understanding how to use an equity lens in conducting day-to-day responsibilities?

- Not helpful at all
- Slightly helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Very helpful
- Not applicable / don't know

Respondent Information

25. What sector do you represent? (select all that apply)

- Faith
- Business
- Media
- Government/Civil
- Nonprofit
- Education

26. What is your current job title/role in these organization(s), if applicable?

27. What is your gender?

28. What is your race?

29. Are you Latinx?

- Yes
- No

30. What is your age?

31. Any information gathered from this survey will be anonymized in the evaluation report. However, in order to better understand the impact of the GBRRER on the community, the CCNY evaluation team may follow-up with you based on your responses. Does the evaluation team have your permission to contact you after this survey for evaluation purposes? (Note: The majority of participants will not be contacted.)

- Yes
- No

32. What is your name?

33. Please include your contact information below:

Phone:

Email:

Thank you for taking the time to provide answers for the GBRRER Member Survey of 2022. You have now completed the survey.

Appendix C

RC 2022 Evaluation Survey Questions

The goal of this survey is to understand your participation in the Reentry Coalition (RC) and its influence on improving outcomes for reentering citizens. This survey is designed for members of the RC or for representatives of members who have attended RC meetings on behalf of an RC member. All responses to this survey will remain confidential and will only be viewed by the CCNY evaluation team and select members of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

Question about your organization:

In this survey “your organization” refers to the primary organization(s) that you are involved with in the community.

1) Has your awareness of reentry resources, services, and best practices expanded due to your involvement in the RC?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

2) Below is a list of RC initiatives. How much impact do you think they have had on the lives of community members who participated in them in the Buffalo region to date?

	Major Impact	Moderate Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact	I am not fully informed about the initiative and cannot assess impact
New Dawn Initiative					
Project Blue					
Service Link Stop					
Erie County Reentry Task Force					

3) If you would like to make comments about any of your ratings above, please do so here, specifying which initiative(s):

4) We are interested in the ripple-effects of the RC. In the past year, how many projects or initiatives have you been involved in (that are NOT part of the RC as listed in the previous question) but ARE related to your involvement in the RC?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+

5) If you answered “1” or more in the previous question: Please briefly describe the project(s)/initiative(s) you are involved in by telling us:

- a) Initiative’s title
- b) The partners involved
- c) The initiative’s goals
- d) Resources that you or your organization has contributed to the initiative

7) Please choose all of the following activities that you have engaged in outside of the RC within the last year:

- I’ve talked to my colleagues about reentry
- I’ve talked to friends and/or family about reentry
- I’ve participated in activities that addresses reentry
- I’ve participated in efforts to change policies that impact reentry
- I have participated in quarterly RC meetings
- I have participated in RC activities outside of quarterly meetings
- Other (specify)

8) Please describe what you contribute to the RC:

Questions about your experiences in the RC

9) The goal of the RC is to improve outcomes for reentering citizens. What recommendations do you have for the RC to help it achieve this goal?

10) What opportunities do you think exist to more effectively (or more quickly) assist citizens in their reentry process? Feel free to answer this question with respect to systems with which you are most familiar or to answer it more broadly.

11) What experiences or activities have been helpful to your preparation to contribute to the work of the RC and related initiatives?

12) Have you taken part in a racial equity impact analysis training?

- Yes
- No

13) Taking part in the Racial Equity Impact Analysis Training (REIAT)...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
...made me prioritize equity work in my professional role(s).					
... gave the Reentry Coalition a common language for discussing and understanding racial equality.					
... did NOT impact my practices related to racial equity.					
... made me more effective at promoting racial equity in my place of employment.					

- 14) To what extent did the Race Equity Impact Analysis Training (REIAT) help you in understanding how to influence others in your organization to further racial equity? (select one)
- Not helpful at all
 - Slightly helpful
 - Somewhat helpful
 - Very helpful
 - Not applicable / don't know
- 15) To what extent did the Race Equity Impact Analysis Training (REIAT) help you in understanding how to use an equity lens in conducting day-to-day responsibilities? (select one)
- Not helpful at all
 - Slightly helpful
 - Somewhat helpful
 - Very helpful
 - Not applicable / don't know
- 16) What further training or support would be helpful to you as an RC member?

Respondent Information

- 17) Which sector do you represent? (check all that apply)
- Faith
 - Business
 - Media
 - Government / Civil
 - Nonprofit
 - Education
- 18) What is your current job title/role in these organization(s), if applicable?
- 19) What is your gender?
- 20) What is your race?
- 21) Are you Latinx?
- Yes
 - No
- 22) What is your age?
- 23) Any information gathered from this survey will be anonymized in the evaluation report. However, in order to better understand the impact of the RC on the community, the CCNY evaluation team may follow-up with you based on your responses. Does the evaluation team have your permission to contact you after this survey for evaluation purposes? (Note: The majority of participants will not be contacted.)
- Yes
 - No
- 24) What is your name?
- 25) How can we best contact you?

Thank you for taking the time to provide answers for the RC Network Survey of 2022. You have now completed the survey.

Appendix D

JJW 2022 Evaluation Survey Questions

1. While thinking about your experience in Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) and its purpose, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
All members share common goals for the JJW.					
Together, members have identified strategic goals and objectives for the JJW.					
JJW plans reflect members' shared goals.					
Other members listen to and value my views and suggestions when we are identifying goals for the JJW.					
Members harness the shared goals and suggestions of others to implement action steps in the community.					
JJW action steps reflect members' shared goals					

2. While thinking about your experience in Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) and its performance, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
Members are working jointly to advance JJW goals.					
Members are creating new knowledge or insights together.					
The way the JJW communicates with stakeholders (e.g. funders, community, and partners) builds support for the JJW.					
The JJW is creating value for the Buffalo Niagara Community.					

[con't next page]

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
The JJW is able to attract additional funds, as needed.					
Members honor their commitments to the JJW.					
The JJW is meeting its strategic goals and objectives.					
Members are achieving more together than they could alone.					
JJW actions and outcomes are recognized by members.					
Members are working together to facilitate and implement additional strategies and actions in the community.					

3. While thinking about your experience in Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) and its capacity, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
The JJW has the material resources needed to advance JJW goals.					
JJW members have the skills they need to advance JJW goals.					
JJW members have the connections they need to advance JJW goals.					
JJW members have personal resources or connections that help advance JJW goals.					
JJW members have harnessed other members' resources and connections to advance JJW goals.					
JJW members have harnessed other members' resources and connections to advance JJW goals.					

4. While thinking about your experience in Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) and its operations, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
JJW's decision making processes encourage members to contribute and collaborate.					
The JJW anticipates, surfaces, and addresses conflict when it arises.					
The JJW's internal communications systems are serving it well.					
All members are contributing time and resources to the JJW.					
The work of the JJW is attuned to the comfort and energy levels of members.					
Members reflect on JJW experience and adjust practice accordingly.					
The JJW has mechanisms in place to promote accountability among members (e.g., agreements, understandings).					

5. While thinking about your experience in Juvenile Justice Works (JJW) and its trust, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't know
Members of the JJW can be trusted.					
Members of the JJW try to be helpful.					
Members of the JJW are mostly just looking out for themselves.					
Members of JJW have demonstrated sustained commitment to its work.					

6. How would you rate the overall trust among members in the JJW?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The work with JJW involves improving outcomes for youths within the juvenile justice system in the Buffalo/Niagara region. How often do you engage in work or service activities that you believe will improve outcomes for youth within the juvenile justice system outside of your time with the JJW?

- Almost never or never
- Less than once a month
- Once a month or so
- Less than every few days, but more than once a month
- Every few days
- At least once a day

8. Please choose all of the following activities that you have engaged in outside of the JJW within the last year:

- I've talked to my colleagues about juvenile justice
- I've talked to friends and/or family about juvenile justice
- I've participated in activities that address juvenile justice
- I've participated in efforts to change policies that impact juvenile justice at my place of employment.
- Other: _____
- I have not participated in any activities involving juvenile justice outside of my work in the JJW

9. In your own words, please describe what you feel you contribute to the JJW:

10. What is your race?

11. What is your gender?

12. How old are you?

13. Which sector do you represent? (check all that apply)

- Faith
- Business
- Media
- Governemt / Civil
- Nonprofit
- Education

14. What is your position in your primary work or volunteer organization?

15. What is your name?

Appendix E

RC and JJW Qualitative Interview Guide

Introduction

A. Introduce team members

B. State the purpose of the evaluation:

“The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has contracted with Community Connections of New York, Inc. (CCNY) to support the evaluation of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable (GBRER). To support this effort, CCNY has embarked on a formative evaluation, consisting of numerous interviews and focus groups with members and stakeholders. The purpose of the evaluation is to elucidate the ways that relationships, communication processes, and governance and leadership structures and strategies are helping the GBRER promote inclusive economic opportunity in Buffalo.”

C. Consent form and permission to audio record

D. Privacy and confidentiality

- a. “Information gathered will be shared only with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and its funders. No individually identifiable information will be included in any reports (no names, physical descriptions, etc.) You are under no obligation to participate in this evaluation process. If you do choose to participate, you may withdraw consent at any time in writing.”

E. Set expectations/ground rules

Getting to know you/Engagement

1. What are you most proud of the [RC/JJW] for achieving?
 - a. How did the group come to that outcome?
 - b. Were there any challenges?
 - c. For RC: Are there other outcomes or collaborations that has been achieved by the coalition?
2. Why do you remain involved in the [RC/JJW]?
 - a. Why do you stay committed and engaged?
 - b. Why do you feel other members remain engaged?
3. How have you contributed to the [RC/JJW]?
 - a. For JJW: What are you most proud of the Juvenile Justice Works Coalition for achieving thus far?
 - b. For JJW: Why do you remain involved in the Juvenile Justice Works coalition?
4. How would you describe the typical level of engagement of various [RC/JJW] members?
 - a. How has member engagement changed over time?

Shared Vision

1. How would you describe the primary goal of the [RC/JJW]?
2. Can you think of examples that demonstrate that [RC/JJW] members share the same goals or do not share the same goals for the group?
3. How do you see the [RC/JJW] fitting into the racial equity work of the Community Foundation?

Leadership, Decision-making

1. How has the approach to leadership in the [RC/JJW] changed in the past year?
 - a. Have you seen any new leaders emerge in the [RC/JJW] in the past year?
2. Can you provide examples of a recent decision made by the [RC/JJW] and how it was made?
 - a. Was everyone able to participate in this process? In what ways?
3. For JJW: What resources have been key to Juvenile Justice Works Coalition successes (this can be thought of broadly-support staff, didactic opportunities, support from your organizations, etc.)?

Communication

1. How do you think communication within the [RC/JJW] has changed in the past year or so?
2. For RC: Has the messaging of the RC's mission and actions to the community changed in the past year?
How so?
3. For JJW: What communication strategies are used to move Juvenile Justice Works Coalition Projects along?
Can you share a few examples?
 - a. Have there been communication barriers or failures? (How have you addressed them)?
 - b. How has the Juvenile Justice Works Coalition had to manage any difficult conversations between its members or other individuals?
 - c. How has the Juvenile Justice Works Coalition been able to have productive conversations about race?

Shared Learning

1. Can you provide examples of how your membership has provided you with education or knowledge about other members' role and duties within their organizations?
 - a. Can you describe how your understanding of other member's roles within the [RC/JJW] have evolved within the past year?
2. For RC: Can you provide examples of how your knowledge of reentry or reentry resources in the community has increased because of conversations with other RC members?

Collaboration, Relationships, Trust

1. How do you think relationships between members of the [RC/JJW] have changed over the past year?
 - a. Can you describe examples of relationships between [RC/JJW] members that have changed over time?
2. Are there examples of new collaborations or partnerships between the [RC/JJW] members?
 - a. What made these successful?
3. Can you tell us about relationships/partnerships that have been created in the past year or so as a result of [RC/JJW] collaboration?
4. How would you characterize the level of trust among [RC/JJW] members?
 - a. What about [RC/JJW] members and its leadership?
 - b. What has led to this being the case?

Impact/Empowerment

1. If it weren't for the [RC/JJW], how would your organization function differently? Do you think that your membership in the [RC/JJW] has changed anything in you or your organization? Why/why not?
 - a. What about other members? Why/why not?
 - b. What about other groups? Why/why not?
2. Are there things that are holding the [RC/JJW] back from achieving its full potential?
3. What evidence is there that the [RC/JJW] is creating systems change in Buffalo?
 - a. For RC: Anything besides the SLS?
4. What other kinds of impact is the [RC/JJW] having on Buffalo?
 - a. What do you anticipate will be the long-term impacts of the [RC/JJW]?

Closing Questions

1. How would you like to see the [RC/JJW] change?
2. What do you envision is the future of the [RC/JJW]?
3. For JJW: Across the entirety of your participation with JJW, what have been the most notable changes and outcomes you have observed as the group has developed and worked toward reaching its goals?
4. For JJW: How has the Juvenile Justice Works Coalition or its members adapted to external factors, opportunities, or pressures?
5. Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F

Survey Results for the Annual Evaluation Juvenile Justice Works Survey

Item	Mean Score (out of 5)		
	JJW 2020	JJW 2021	JJW 2022
Shared Vision			
All members share common goals for the JJW.	4.37	4.21	4.18
Together, members have identified strategic goals and objectives for the JJW.	4.16	4.57	4.00
JJW plans reflect members' shared goals.	4.26	4.29	4.18
Shared governance and leadership			
Other members listen to and value my views and suggestions when we are identifying goals for the JJW.	4.58	4.64	4.17
Members are working jointly to advance JJW goals.	4.37	4.00	3.83
Members are creating new knowledge or insights together.	4.42	4.00	4.08
The way the JJW communicates with stakeholders (e.g. funders, community, and partners) builds support for JJW.	4.56	3.93	3.90
Progress toward goals			
JJW is creating value for the Buffalo Niagara Community.	4.61	4.14	4.25
The JJW is able to attract additional funds, as needed.	3.61	3.50	3.67
Members honor their commitments to JJW.	4.28	3.50	3.75
The JJW is meeting its strategic goals and objectives.	4.00	3.64	4.89
Members are achieving more together than they could alone.	4.50	4.29	4.50
Access to needed resources			
The JJW has the material resources needed to advance JJW goals.	4.06	4.00	3.80
JJW members have the skills they need to advance JJW goals.	4.39	4.36	4.08
JJW members have the connections they need to advance JJW goals.	4.39	4.43	4.50
JJW members have personal resources or connections that help advance JJW goals.	4.11	4.21	4.45
JJW decision making processes encourage members to contribute and collaborate.	4.44	4.50	4.42
JJW anticipates, surfaces, and addresses conflict when it arises.	3.83	3.57	3.55
Member engagement			
JJW's internal communications systems are serving it well.	3.89	3.71	3.90
All members are contributing time and resources to JJW.	4.17	3.36	3.67
The work of JJW is attuned to the comfort and energy levels of members.	4.17	4.00	4.09
Members reflect on JJW experience and adjust practice accordingly.	3.94	3.43	3.55
The JJW has mechanisms in place to promote accountability among members (e.g., agreements, understandings).	4.17	3.36	3.55
Trust			
Members of the JJW can be trusted.	4.17	4.29	4.00
Members of the JJW try to be helpful.	4.56	4.50	4.25
Members of the JJW are mostly just looking out for themselves (reversed).	4.28	2.07	1.83
How would you rate the overall trust among members in the JJW?	7.39/10	8.21/10	7.70/10

JJW survey results are not applicable for 2019 due to the group's early stages of development at the time of evaluation.

Appendix G

2021 Racial Healing Circle Year End Report



360 Delaware Avenue, Suite 106
Buffalo, NY 14202
Tel: 716.853.9596
Fax: 716.852.0046
www.nfjcwny.org

President
Rene Petties-Jones

Chairperson
Bernard A. Tolbert

Vice Chairpersons
Tamara O. Alsace, Ph.D.
Gretchen R. Geitter
Michael N. Martin
Bradford R. Watts

Treasurer
David M. Schmidt

Secretary
Amanda M. Hays

Assistant Secretary
Lori D. Pratt

Foundation Consultant
Catherine F. Schweitzer

Legal Counsel
James W. Smyton, Esq.

National Board Representative
Rev. Craig D. Pridgen

Immediate Past Chair
Glenn S. Jackson

Board of Directors
Hon. Susan M. Eagan
Dawn Gilliam
Anne E. Joynt, Esq.
Mark R. Laurrie
Rabbi Alexander M. Lazarus-Klein
Maureen T. Lynch
Larry A. Martin
Hon. Amy C. Martoche
Anna S. M. McCarthy, Esq.
Cantor Penny S. Myers
Emily Burns Perryman
Suzanne Rosenblith, Ph.D.
Sheldon K. Smith, Esq.
DeWan L. Stroud
BJ Stasio

Student Members
Sam Farrell
Jamal Harris, Jr.

Emeritus Members
Joan K. Bozer
Kenneth P. Friedman, Esq.
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D.
Christopher T. Greene, Esq.
Mary H. Gresham, Ph.D.
Amy J. Habib
Tamar P. Halpern, Esq.
C. Douglas Hartmayer
John G. Horn, Esq.
Muriel A. Howard, Ph.D.
Richard M. Kamats
Alphonso O'Neil-White
Linda D. Pollack
Gary D. Quenneville
Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.
Pamela Jacobs Vogt
John N. Walsh, III

2021 Racial Healing Circle Years End Report



- Funding Supported:** In January 2021, the NFJC played a role in the 2021 National Day of Racial Healing which was held on January 19th. This included providing logistical and technical support for the speaker including video recordings, registration, as well as back-end support.

This year's virtual presentation featuring Bishop Michael Curry drew hundreds to watch virtually. Even though we are still dealing with the Pandemic and all its nuances, people were very anxious to hear the Bishop's message of unity, love, and understanding as was conveyed in his recorded words. The presentation also included a musical tribute, as well as a presentation about activities that surrounded racial healing in our WNY region. The session ended with a panel discussion with area faith leaders as well as audience Q&A. The Community Foundation team as well as the Episcopal Diocese played a large collaborative role in the success of this National Day of Racial Healing in WNY.

All sessions in 2021 continue to be virtual due to safety concerns. The model was designed using the expertise of the NFJC trainers to facilitate conversations in large virtual rooms as well as smaller breakout sessions. Topics have ranged from Ethnic/Racial Identity discussions to Racism and terminology such as White Privilege and Allyship. Current events and topics have been the cornerstone for our Racial Healing conversations.

(cont.)

A Just Community Begins With Me

The National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York (NFJC) is a human relations organization dedicated to overcoming racism, bias, and discrimination by building understanding, respect and trust through education, advocacy and community involvement.





2. **Outcomes:** We have had several requests for Racial Healing Circles as a result of word of mouth and first hand participant experience. The increase in demand is a direct result of another successful year for the Racial Healing Circles, and the community need in our region and beyond. People continue to want to find safe ways to discuss their concerns, fears, and questions regarding race relations.

These sessions have led to a much deeper understanding of the racial divides and other issues surrounding race relations, not only in our WNY region, but around the country. Thought provoking conversations and dialogue have increased as a result of these geographically wide reaching efforts. Our Circles have touched individuals from both the East and the West Coast of the United States. Though these Circles have all followed the Racial Healing Circle modality, some have chosen to call these Racial Healing Circles “Courageous Conversations” or other related terms.

Since January of 2021, we have delivered 15 Circles. Each Circle has averaged 20-30 participants or more with some having 60 or more participants. We now have a roster of approximately 20 diverse Facilitators who have eagerly contributed to the Circles.

We have also participated in regular Facilitator training, consultation, and conversations to assure continuity in programming and service deliverables.

3. **Total Leveraged Funding:** One of the best-selling points of the Circles is that they continue to be free of charge to presenting organizations. The NFJC has accepted donations to help defray the presentation costs and to cover unexpected expenses from the increased number of circles. We have recently received a small grant to produce 6 Circles to a National Women’s group which covers cities all across the United States.

President
Rene Petties-Jones

Chairperson
Bernard A. Tolbert

Vice Chairpersons
Tamara O. Alsace, Ph.D.
Gretchen R. Geitter
Michael N. Martin
Bradford R. Watts

Treasurer
David M. Schmidt

Secretary
Amanda M. Hays

Assistant Secretary
Lori D. Pratt

Foundation Consultant
Catherine F. Schweitzer

Legal Counsel
James W. Smyton, Esq.

National Board Representative
Rev. Craig D. Pridgen

Immediate Past Chair
Glenn S. Jackson

Board of Directors
Hon. Susan M. Eagan
Dawn Gilliam
Anne E. Joynt, Esq.
Mark R. Laurrie
Rabbi Alexander M. Lazarus-Klein
Maureen T. Lynch
Larry A. Martin
Hon. Amy C. Martoche
Anna S. M. McCarthy, Esq.
Cantor Penny S. Myers
Emily Burns Perryman
Suzanne Rosenblith, Ph.D.
Sheldon K. Smith, Esq.
DeWan L. Stroud
BJ Stasio

Student Members
Sam Farrell
Jamal Harris, Jr.

Emeritus Members
Joan K. Bozer
Kenneth P. Friedman, Esq.
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D.
Christopher T. Greene, Esq.
Mary H. Gresham, Ph.D.
Amy J. Habib
Tamar P. Halpern, Esq.
C. Douglas Hartmayer
John G. Horn, Esq.
Muriel A. Howard, Ph.D.
Richard M. Kamats
Alphonso O’Neil-White
Linda D. Pollack
Gary D. Quenneville
Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.
Pamela Jacobs Vogt
John N. Walsh, III

2021 Racial Healing Circle Years End Report cont. (page 2)

A Just Community Begins With Me

The National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York (NFJC) is a human relations organization dedicated to overcoming racism, bias, and discrimination by building understanding, respect and trust through education, advocacy and community involvement.





4. **Challenges and Lessons Learned:** Some of the Circles continue to draw large numbers which can be challenging. We continue to refine our virtual presentations to best manage these numbers while continuing to provide as close to a real in-person experience as possible. Working with both large and small group work, we seem to have found a way to seamlessly go between the dyad/triad scope that these Circles were created on. Time management will be a challenge as these circles are popular and we don't want to burn out any of the facilitation team.

5. **Collaboration:** The NFJC collaborated with the Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination and other partners for the National Day of Racial Healing. In addition, we have an ongoing working relationship with the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition who have provided facilitation support using their existing and trained facilitators to complete our Racial Healing Circle Facilitation roster.

President
Rene Petties-Jones

Chairperson
Bernard A. Tolbert

Vice Chairpersons
Tamara O. Alsace, Ph.D.
Gretchen R. Geitter
Michael N. Martin
Bradford R. Watts

Treasurer
David M. Schmidt

Secretary
Amanda M. Hays

Assistant Secretary
Lori D. Pratt

Foundation Consultant
Catherine F. Schweitzer

Legal Counsel
James W. Smyton, Esq.

National Board Representative
Rev. Craig D. Pridgen

Immediate Past Chair
Glenn S. Jackson

Board of Directors
Hon. Susan M. Eagan
Dawn Gilliam
Anne E. Joynt, Esq.
Mark R. Laurrie
Rabbi Alexander M. Lazarus-Klein
Maureen T. Lynch
Larry A. Martin
Hon. Amy C. Martoche
Anna S. M. McCarthy, Esq.
Cantor Penny S. Myers
Emily Burns Perryman
Suzanne Rosenblith, Ph.D.
Sheldon K. Smith, Esq.
DeWan L. Stroud
BJ Stasio

Student Members
Sam Farrell
Jamal Harris, Jr.

Emeritus Members
Joan K. Bozer
Kenneth P. Friedman, Esq.
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D.
Christopher T. Greene, Esq.
Mary H. Gresham, Ph.D.
Amy J. Habib
Tamar P. Halpern, Esq.
C. Douglas Hartmayer
John G. Horn, Esq.
Muriel A. Howard, Ph.D.
Richard M. Kamats
Alphonso O'Neil-White
Linda D. Pollack
Gary D. Quenneville
Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.
Pamela Jacobs Vogt
John N. Walsh, III

2021 Racial Healing Circle Years End Report cont. (page 3)

A Just Community Begins With Me

The National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York (NFJC) is a human relations organization dedicated to overcoming racism, bias, and discrimination by building understanding, respect and trust through education, advocacy and community involvement.





6. **Expenditure Responsibility:** The NFJC allocated \$23,000 for personnel costs which included salary, employee benefits and payroll taxes to have an NFJC employee develop, manage, and deliver the Racial Healing Circles.

The remaining grant was used towards operational expenses including funds to cover a small stipend to the many facilitators needed to complete the Circles. As the number of Racial Healing Circle sessions in 2021 continue to exceed the initial budget of six sessions, NFJC's time commitment and allocated costs continue to exceed the original allocated \$25,000 grant commitment. Looking ahead, the NFJC will research ways to meet the needs of the community and will seek to collaborate as much as possible to explore ways for additional funding for support. We want to continue to provide this valued community outreach program at no cost to participants or organizations.

This 2021 Year End report is respectfully submitted on November 30, 2021 by:



Rene Petties-Jones
NFJC President



Bernie Tolbert
NFJC Board Chair

2021 Racial Healing Circle Years End Report cont. (page 4)

President
Rene Petties-Jones

Chairperson
Bernard A. Tolbert

Vice Chairpersons
Tamara O. Alsace, Ph.D.
Gretchen R. Geitter
Michael N. Martin
Bradford R. Watts

Treasurer
David M. Schmidt

Secretary
Amanda M. Hays

Assistant Secretary
Lori D. Pratt

Foundation Consultant
Catherine F. Schweitzer

Legal Counsel
James W. Smyton, Esq.

National Board Representative
Rev. Craig D. Pridgen

Immediate Past Chair
Glenn S. Jackson

Board of Directors
Hon. Susan M. Eagan
Dawn Gilliam
Anne E. Joynt, Esq.
Mark R. Laurrie
Rabbi Alexander M. Lazarus-Klein
Maureen T. Lynch
Larry A. Martin
Hon. Amy C. Martoche
Anna S. M. McCarthy, Esq.
Cantor Penny S. Myers
Emily Burns Perryman
Suzanne Rosenblith, Ph.D.
Sheldon K. Smith, Esq.
DeWan L. Stroud
BJ Stasio

Student Members
Sam Farrell
Jamal Harris, Jr.

Emeritus Members
Joan K. Bozer
Kenneth P. Friedman, Esq.
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D.
Christopher T. Greene, Esq.
Mary H. Gresham, Ph.D.
Amy J. Habib
Tamar P. Halpern, Esq.
C. Douglas Hartmayer
John G. Horn, Esq.
Muriel A. Howard, Ph.D.
Richard M. Kamats
Alphonso O'Neil-White
Linda D. Pollack
Gary D. Quenneville
Amy Habib Rittling, Esq.
Pamela Jacobs Vogt
John N. Walsh, III

Appendix H

YEC Annual Evaluation Survey

2022 Youth Employment Coalition Evaluation Survey

The survey was fielded February 9-17, 2022. After the initial request YEC members were sent five reminders, including two from the YEC project manager. Of 61 possible respondents, 30 completed the survey, a response rate of 48%. Participants preferred to complete the survey anonymously; 14 shared their organization and 11 shared their organizational role.

Youth Employment Coalition Member Perceptions (n, percent)

N=30

Perception that the Coalition Is United Around Common Goals

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
Together, members have identified an action plan for the YEC.	16	53.3%	11	36.7%	2	6.7%	1	3.3%	0	%	0	%
All members share common goals for the YEC.	12	40.0%	16	53.3%	1	3.3%	0	%	0	%	1	3.3%
I believe in the YEC's goals.	16	53.3%	13	43.3%	1	3.3%	0	%	0	%	0	%

Perceptions of the YEC's Goal Progress

The YEC is engaging the right partners to accomplish its goals.	6	20.0%	21	70.0%	1	3.3%	1	3.3%	0	%	1	3.3%
YEC members have connections that help advance YEC goals.	13	43.3%	13	43.3%	4	13.3%	0	%	0	%	0	%
The YEC is on track to meet the goals for the first	7	23.3%	14	46.7%	6	20.0%	0	%	0	%	3	10.0%

year of its three
year plan.

Perceptions of YEC Leadership and Organizational Structure and Support

The YEC has the right leadership to succeed.	10	33.3%	15	50.0%	3	10.0%	0	%	0	%	2	6.7%
YEC's decision-making processes encourage members to contribute and collaborate.	13	43.3%	12	40.0%	2	6.7%	1	3.3%	2	6.7%	0	0%
The YEC meetings are helping it move towards its goals.	9	30.0%	15	50.0%	4	13.3%	1	3.3%	1	3.3%	0	%
The YEC meetings are conducted in a way that is helping it achieve its goals.	9	30.0%	14	46.7%	5	16.7%	2	6.7%	0	%	0	%
The YEC anticipates, surfaces, and addresses conflict when it arises.	5	16.7%	9	30.0%	10	33.3%	0	%	0	%	6	20.0%
The YEC's internal communication systems are serving it well.	5	16.7%	13	43.3%	6	20.0%	1	3.3%	0	%	5	16.7%
Youth have an adequate voice in the YEC.	6	20.0%	10	33.3%	9	30.0%	3	10.0%	1	3.3%	1	3.3%
The Nancy Martin Consulting team brings a great deal of value to the YEC.	7	24.1%	12	41.4%	6	20.7%	0	%	0	%	4	13.8%
The YEC has the administrative support needed to	10	34.5%	13	44.8%	2	6.9%	0	%	0	%	4	13.8%

advance YEC goals.

YEC Member Engagement

Members honor their commitments to the YEC.	6	20.0%	17	56.7%	5	16.7%	0	%	0	%	2	6.7%
Most members are contributing time and resources to the YEC.	3	10.0%	18	60.0%	3	10.0%	3	10.0%	0	%	3	10.0%
The YEC has mechanisms in place to promote accountability among members.	3	10.0%	10	33.3%	7	23.3%	6	20.0%	0	%	4	13.3%
I am making a contribution to the work of the YEC.	9	30.0%	16	53.3%	3	10.0%	0	%	0	%	2	6.7%

YEC Member Trust

Members of the YEC can be trusted.	8	26.7%	15	50.0%	4	13.3%	0	%	0	%	3	10.0%
------------------------------------	---	-------	----	-------	---	-------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Perceptions of Opportunities for Learning

I have deepened my understanding of how to eliminate racial inequalities by participating in the YEC.	3	10.0%	16	53.3%	7	23.3%	3	10.0%	1	3.3%	0	%
The learning opportunities provided by the Community Foundation are valuable to advancing the work of the YEC.	13	43.3%	12	40.0%	3	10.0%	0	%	0	%	2	6.7%
Because our coalition took part in the racial equity	7	23.3%	12	40.0%	6	20.0%	1	3.3%	0	%	4	13.3%

impact analysis training we are collectively more effective in our coalition work.

I am learning from my fellow YEC members. 9 30.0% 20 66.7% 1 3.3% 0 % 0 % 0 %

Open-Ended Questions

Should the YEC be engaging any other partners in order to achieve its goals, and if so, who or which organization?

- Engaging the NFTA or City Civil Engineers could help impact the transportation issues our youth experience
- An invitation went out to a broad array of providers and those who participate are effective contributing members. Others may just choose not to be part of the group
- I do not feel like there should be a limit on partners. In my opinion, the YEC should be engaging any partners that are willing to join. BPS is one that came to my mind. Do we have any representatives from the school district at our meetings? Is there anybody in the district who even knows what we are doing and the initiatives we are bringing to the community?
- I know work is being done on this, but involving employers to actually create employment opportunities is crucial to the success of the YEC. So far all active partners are ones that were already committed to youth and that alone doesn't create the needed pipelines to employment.
- Girls on the run
- Continue to pursue youth engagement
- Engaging more employer partners
- The Belle Center

Does the YEC face any challenges and how could they be solved?

- Generally getting everyone on the same page is challenging, I commend any effort to attempt this!
- making sure youth voices are being heard
- Youth lacking basic skills in reading and writing which discourages youth to participate in the hubs. This can be solved by eventually expanding the hubs in schools and getting youth to understand the importance of school and getting a education. A lot of the needs and wants of youth are the improvements of their high schools that they attend.

- Collaboration among providers is always a challenge. And, many of the participating organizations are stretched for time and resources which limits their availability and ability to fully contribute
- The YEC faces a huge challenge in outreach! I know this is a team effort, but the youth engagement won't be effective without consistent engagement from the youth of all ages and backgrounds. It may be helpful to have a key person in charge of getting information from all organizations that have youth that has voiced interest in the YEC and making sure they are contacting the youth for particular events (having a master list).
- One challenge I see is how the system will work between referrals to and from the YAC Hub. Many groups offer similar services, and their funding is contingent on the number of individuals served. There will need to be equity regarding referrals.
- Reaching more opportunity youth, which by definition, are difficult to reach. Once the hub is up, a coordinated outreach plan will be needed, which we have already identified.
- I think a challenge is the commitment from employers to create more equitable hiring practices. This could be a formal stated commitment and making sure they are involved in racial equity training. Getting trust and true engagement from YEC members not on the steering committee or in workgroups is also a challenge. I think they need more concrete examples of how the YEC will make a difference for them to buy in.
- Continuing the progress of implementing the plan
- I think the biggest challenge is effectively opening the doors to the HUB and meeting the goals set.

Would you recommend any changes be made to the way the YEC steering committee and workgroups make decisions and why?

- I think the workgroups should be more collaborative and also more transparent. Upcoming meetings are really not discussed with workgroup members.
- Increase in transparency within the membership. Better understanding of the process used to increase the volume of members of the steering committee.
- The process works so I would not change anything
- I don't think so. Everyone in the YEC has been given a chance to be as involved as they want and have that decision-making influence.
- Consensus model is working
- I feel there needs to be an added layer of transparency in decision-making.
- I would suggest some funds be raised for full time Staff member and some AmeriCorps services members as well as Graduate Student Interns

List of Acronyms

BLTF – Business Leaders Task Force

BNP – Buffalo Niagara Partnership

BPI – Buffalo Purchasing Initiative

BSO – Business Serving Organization

Community Foundation - Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

GBRER – Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable

JJW – Juvenile Justice Works

Kellogg - W.K. Kellogg Foundation

MBK-BMoC – My Brother’s Keeper - Boys and Men of Color Coalition

MWBE – Minority or Woman-Owned Business Enterprise

NFJC - National Federation for Just Communities

PC - Purchasing Council

RC – Reentry Coalition

REIA – Racial Equity Impact Analysis

SBDC - Buffalo State Small Business Development Center

TRHT – Truth, Racial Healing, Transformation

TMP - Talent Pipeline Management

YEC - Youth Employment Council

Evaluation Team Biographies

CCNY, Inc. is a nonprofit management services organization that partners with community-based organizations, behavioral health agencies, and government agencies to provide training, evaluation, quality improvement, and innovative tools to improve the lives of people in the communities their clients serve.

Jessica Tufte, M.P.H. is the Assistant Director of Evaluation & Analytics with CCNY, Inc. where she leads the team's ten evaluators and analysts, managing a portfolio that includes contributions to more than a dozen projects across eight programs. She came to manage having previously worked in program evaluation and having earned a Masters in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with a concentration in Health Behavior. She draws from professional experiences in nonprofit program management, community health, refugee resettlement, and in programs using music for social change. Previous evaluation work includes comprehensive multi-year evaluations of Erie County's Children's System of Care and the awareness and use of North Carolina's Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) for North Carolina's State Department of Health and Human Services.

Heather Orom, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Community Health and Health Behavior in the School of Public Health and Health Professions at the University at Buffalo. She is also the Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the School. Her primary research focus is the causes of health disparities in cancer prevention and treatment. She has been engaged in a number of community initiatives to address social determinants that adversely affect the health of African Americans in Buffalo.

Lisa Kulka M.S., M.Ed. is a Senior Evaluation Associate with CCNY, Inc. and uses professional and academic experience in data analysis, management, and advocacy for vulnerable populations. Lisa formerly served as the Assistant Director/Data Manager for the University at Buffalo Liberty Partnerships Program, creating and leading innovative projects that removed barriers to postsecondary access for academically and socioeconomically at-risk students in the City of Buffalo. Lisa is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University at Buffalo.

Ernesto Mercado Irizarry, M.S., MHC is an Evaluation Associate with CCNY, Inc. where he applies knowledge and skills gained from behavioral health clinical experience and research related to sexuality, gender, and race. Additional involvement in community organizing, seminar facilitation, and public speaking also inform his work. Such experiences have allowed him first-hand insight into Buffalo's mental health sector, particularly within the Latinx community in Erie County. Ernesto holds a B.A. in Psychology from SUNY Fredonia and is a graduate of University at Buffalo's M.S. in Mental Health Counseling.

Motherland Art Studio is an illustration and design studio that works for change makers. Their clients include innovators and advocates for social, economic, and environmental change and advancement. Their work helps simplify conceptual ideas, secure funding for, and visualize end results.

