

Building the Engine of Community Development in Detroit

Community Development Career and Educational Pathways Research Findings

Future Demand for Community Development Jobs

In looking at the labor market data for the community development industry, overall employment demand isn't projected to increase during the next five years, however the data available through the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other federal data sources may not fully capture the current activity in the market that could influence demand. From the focus groups and interviews, there was not clear agreement on whether demand would increase or decrease. However, we did come away with an understanding of overall demand and specific areas where we may see increasing need for work, potentially more employment, and advancement opportunities. Following are observations from the focus groups and interviews that inform our understanding of demand.

Overall Demand

- More community development professionals are needed to work in communities, but that there are not jobs for them. This is a problem unique to this industry – where demand does not influence supply. While Building the Engine is focusing on both the demand and supply side, it will be important to better understand and track how demand is changing over time.
- While all industries (allied industries included) offer opportunities to do community development work, there is a challenge with accessibility. Getting these jobs is very much who you know and companies hire people with very specific experience.
- There has been an uptick in interest in community development careers and field related credential attainment. A concern is that although there is an emerging emphasis on preparation for the field, there will remain a lack of job opportunities for graduates.

Areas of Work Where Demand May Increase

Where demand is growing, it looks different than it did in the 80s and 90s. If demand were to increase, the areas to see an increase could include:

- Workforce Development
- Land Assembly (especially vacant residential lot consolidation)
- Land Transformation/Reuse
- Green Storm Water Infrastructure
- Beautification and Trash Removal
- Community Organizing
- Advocacy
- Real Estate Development

Opportunities in Different Industries

- *Community Development Organizations* – Limited availability of community development jobs in the community development industry and little to no opportunity for advancement within CDO organizations. The primary force that affects this is the scarcity of resources available to CDOs to implement projects and develop the scale of their organizations.
- *Corporate Philanthropy* -- More opportunities available for entry level and mid-level positions, staffing levels are higher and the range of job titles are more diverse.
- *Private Sector* – Respondents also thought there are significantly more community development opportunities in the private sector than in CDOs. These jobs usually require specific experience and expertise. Because CDO staff tend to have more generalist backgrounds and skills (given the nature of work in CDOs), they can't compete for these positions.

Factors Influencing Demand

- *Competition for Talent* – For demand to increase within CDOs specifically, the pay and benefits would have to improve greatly to attract and retain the best talent.
- *Influence of the Mayor* – With a strong Mayor and more centralized management, demand often decreases for CDOs as the City provides a better level of service than before, and some of the jobs that had been done by CDOs would now be done by the City or CDFIs. This could leave the size of the industry stable, with shifting the location of the employment base, jobs, and potential career pathways. This seems especially true for the planning department.
- *Philanthropic Community* – The interest and priorities of the Philanthropic Community often drive CDO hiring. It's been said that "Demand is desire with money behind it" and the foundations have the money.
- *Power Imbalance Between Neighborhoods, System Providers, and Funders* – Due to challenges neighborhoods face (high rates of mobility, concern for safety, etc.) there is a diminished sense of identity and it's harder for people to connect to their neighborhoods and identify common cause. This creates a power imbalance between residents and system providers and funders, which in turn diminishes a neighborhood's ability to advocate for what it needs. Less resources flow to the community which result in less investment in the work that is needed. Unless this power imbalance changes there won't be the resources needed to hire more community development professionals and there won't be mobility opportunities for these professionals.

Career Pathway Availability and Accessibility

Hiring from the Community

Observations about other industry experience with hiring from the community include:

- *Foundations* – Generally foundations do not hire from the community simply because of the limited number of positions available in their organizations. There is a consciousness about the importance of hiring from the community. When they did hire from the grassroots they saw the value of bringing someone with a different lens and skillset, and the grassroots leader was a great addition to the work. However, hiring from the community can be problematic
- *Corporate philanthropy* – faces challenges with the pipeline of applicants for the positions they have available. If community members are applying for positions, the applications are not making it through their HR process. (It was mentioned that community members are successfully hired in other positions throughout the corporation).
- *Government* – puts some emphasis on local hiring, but foundations, CDFIs and others seem to put less emphasis on Detroit residency requirements.

Other factors influencing hiring community-based talent include:

- *Credential and skill requirements* – Because place based work requires people that live and work in the neighborhood, it is often hard to find people with traditional qualifications (college degree) and technical skills that live in the neighborhood.
- *Potential to disrupt the status quo* – There is sometimes resistance to hiring grassroots talent because companies or foundations don't want to experience a "disruption" in their organizations. (i.e. new staff makes push to empower neighborhoods, like engaging in participatory budgeting, etc.)
- *Lack of support for training/mobility within and across companies* – There is not a concerted attempt to train a bench of talent either in an organization or between organizations. Banks, for example, intentionally move their people around to give them experience in all areas of banking. There is a concern from young people in the industry that there are not clear ways to move up within CDOs, though there is a leadership change in process with the old guard retiring and new leaders currently stepping in.

Mobility Between Industries

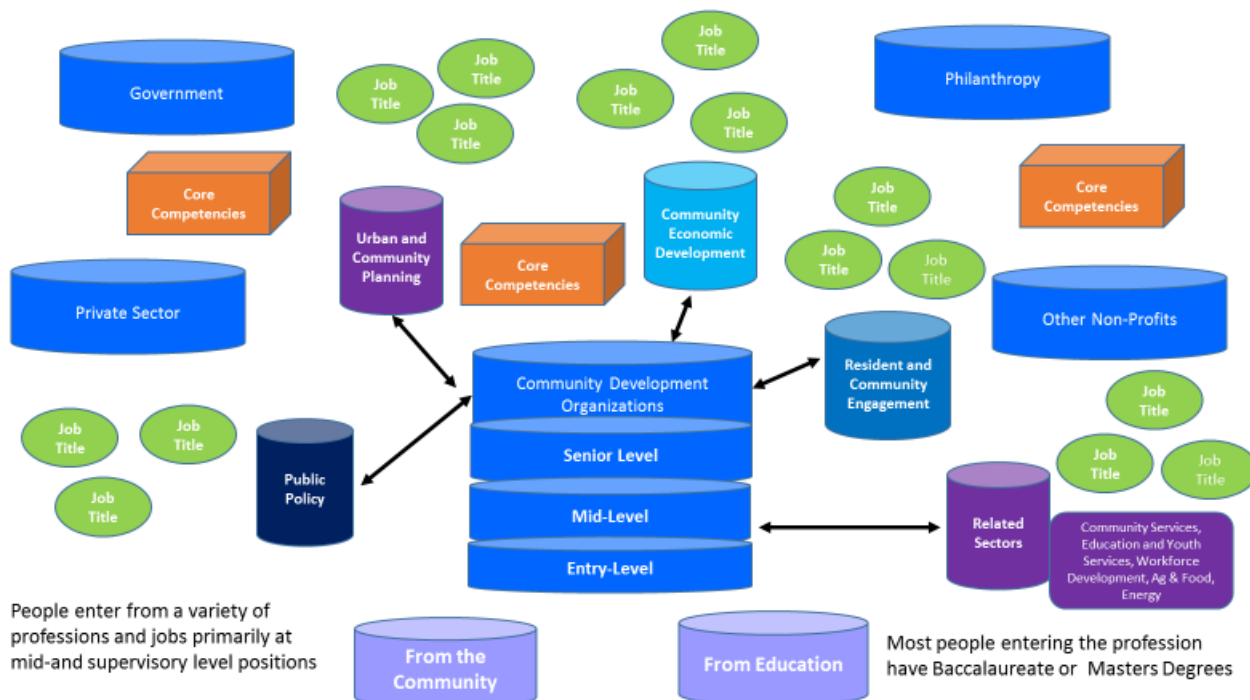
Observations about mobility within and across industries include:

- *Non-profit to Philanthropy or Corporate and Corporate to Non-Profit* – There is some mobility from non-profit to government, but transitioning from non-profit to philanthropy or corporate positions is rarer. Transitions from corporate to non-profit only happen for senior level leadership positions.
- *Timing of Transitions* – It is easier to transition to a different industry/sector earlier in your career. It is more difficult for senior level staff to transition because, for example, there are different competencies in a CDO executive vs. a corporate executive.
- *Transferrable Skills* – There is more opportunity for mobility with skill specific community development jobs, for example, housing/development staff can transition to a government or quasi-governmental agency.
- *Sector Specific Opportunities* – Depending on the sector you work in, there can be more opportunity for growth. Planning and real estate jobs often provide good opportunities for growth because there is a lot of corporate opportunity for real estate expertise.
- *Costs of Moving to Another Industry* – There are benefits to working in each of the industries (non-profit, corporate, philanthropy). However, when you move between the industries you give up something. There can be mobility between the industries, but job seekers must weigh these issues carefully.

Barriers to Mobility

- *Getting Stuck in Certain Types of Work, including Leadership Roles*
- *Developing Generalist vs. Specialist Skills*
- *Changing Misperceptions and Mindsets about CDO Work and Skill Sets, Working in Corporations, and Community Groups*
- *Limited Awareness of Opportunities, including a Lack of communication and coaching*

The following graphic depicts different aspects of the community development system that need to be better aligned and part of a developing a more coherent career and educational pathway system.



Existing Educational Pathways

The system has many building blocks in place but few connect in a cohesive pathway that serves learners entering through the community, through academia, or from work. There appear to be two examples of direct pathway alignment; 1) the link between Baccalaureate level credentials and Master's Degree programs and 2) people working who have Baccalaureate Degrees entering Master's Degree programs.

Student Mix

- Most students participating in the educational pathway are concentrated at the Master's Degree level where most programs are offered.
- African Americans are under-represented in the student population although that varies from institution to institution.

Recruitment

- There appears to be no targeted institutional recruitment strategies for academic programs related to CDO fields especially for people living in the community; recruiting is on the institutional level and not program-specific.
- Targeted, grass root recruitment of people from the community to participate in the educational pathway is not developed.
- There is one high school Community Leadership program being offered at Cody Leadership Academy and may demonstrate the importance of grass roots community leaders being introduced to community development work early in their post high school career.

Credentials

- There are multiple degrees available that lead to CDO jobs with only one degree – U of D Mercy offering a Master's degree in Community Development. There are no specific programs at the Baccalaureate level that point people to CDO work.
- There is one Associates Degree program that articulates to the Baccalaureate level.
- There are two certificates programs embedded in Associate degrees leading to Baccalaureate programs in social work and community change studies.
- Many programs offer multiple areas of concentration within the degree.

Competencies and Career Pathways

- Academic institutions struggled to define competencies related to program outcomes. Going forward, program outcomes will be used as a proxy for competencies.
- Alignment of career pathways and educational pathways appears to be ad hoc.
- There appears to be no intentional entry-ramp for those entering the field through community work (entry level to mid-level work) and no way to assess and certify skills for work place learning that would lead to academic credit.

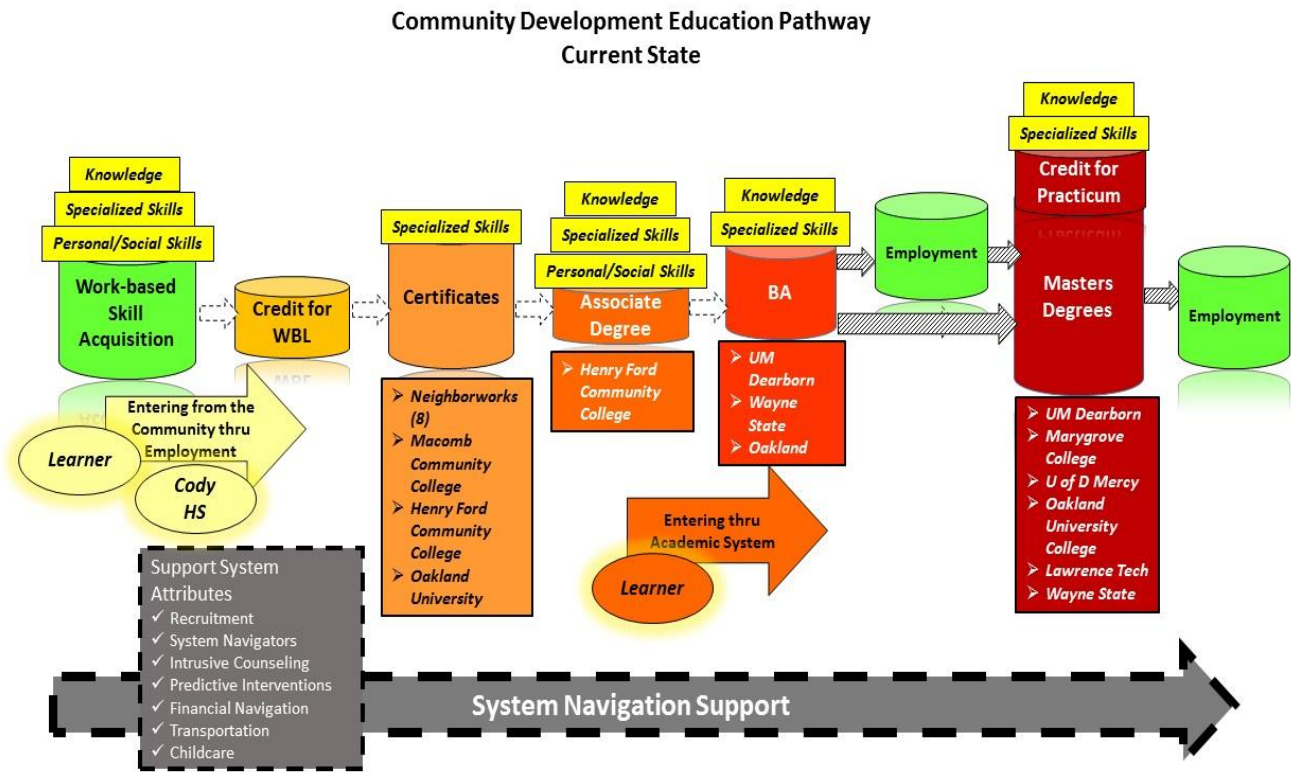
Experiential Learning and Career Guidance Offered

- There are several examples of the mix of experiential learning offered through these programs, the occupational guidance being provided, and the mix of jobs students are finding upon graduation.

Student Support/Career Pathway Navigation

- Comprehensive support/navigation system is not present (currently institutionally based). Student success system to navigate the fragmented academic pathways is critical to developing a pipeline of grassroots CDO professionals at the entry, mid-and managerial level.

The model below is a visual of the fragmented system. Dotted lines represent opportunities to solidify the pathway to help increase learner opportunities, streamline the process and draw students from a larger talent pool of people to build a cadre of Community Development Professionals.



Goals for Developing a More Coherent Set of Pathways and System

The following goals emerged through the focus groups and interviews and can help guide the choices for creating the “ideal future state” for community development career and educational pathways.

1. Create clearer pathways and a feeder system into the field for grassroots leaders and aspiring community development professionals
2. Provide different opportunities for professionals currently in the field to further develop their core and specialized skills in community development tied to advancement
3. Identify growth opportunities for CD staff that allow for cross-pollination and horizontal and vertical mobility within and between the core and allied industries
4. Develop a community-based model for providing career and educational pathway navigation support for people entering the field, as well for mid- and senior-level professionals

Potential Strategies that Underpin Goals and Recommendations

1) Developing Feeder System for Grassroots Leaders and Aspiring Community Development Professionals

There was a consistent emphasis on being purposeful about engaging with the grassroots and using conveners in the community to connect to the community. Some examples for different approaches to engaging communities:

- *Work with existing intermediaries to convene and support groups already involved in creating solutions*
- *Ensure community engagement, sustainability, and capacity building is part of project design*
- *Establish inclusive outreach processes*
- *Further engage and develop volunteer talent and other residents*
- *Raise awareness of opportunities to strengthen the pipeline from communities*

2) Supporting Professional Development for People Already Working in the Field

There is more we can do to further develop professionals working in CD space, whose organizations can't provide professional development to prepare them as emerging leaders. Focusing on professional and leadership development will support sustainability efforts. Some examples of different approaches for professional development include:

- *Increase access to resources for staff development -- Provide longer term funding, including philanthropic funding*
- *Link organizational and individual capacity building*
- *Provide support for more succession planning*
- *Provide more community-based opportunities for learning*
- *Adopt practices from the Fellows program*

3) Facilitating Cross-Sector Trust, Collaboration, Transferrable Skills, and Mobility

If we are genuinely trying to build capacity of CDO's/grass roots groups to do development projects, we must be open with one another about what it's going to take to foster trust and build capacity. What made community development system successful in other states, Boston, Massachusetts, is the cross pollination of CDO professionals working in government, philanthropy, helps bring CDO perspective to institutions that have influence on the CD system. Two different types of people are involved as CD professionals, those coming from business with lots of technical skills (balance sheets, operating plans), and those coming from the community with lifetime experience in community engagement and representation. We need to connect these two skill sets.

- *Increase/improve communication between sectors; honestly discuss issues related to capacity*
- *Develop pathways across industry and allied industries and with corporations; cross-pollination of staff across sectors and companies*
- *Prioritize skill building for CDO leaders and community organizers; offer staff fellowships*
- *Build community development skills among business professionals*
- *Link to innovative capacity building approaches*

4) **Creating Different Models and Pathways for Education and Training Programs and Credentials**

There are different needs for training and credentials at the entry, mid, and professional levels. There is a balance between providing some minimal structure to the field without controlling it and the organic nature of responding to the needs of a community. There is opportunity for innovation in the professional development and educational program and pathway delivery system. Designing new, creative ways of training is exciting and needed.

- *Further explore the need for/value of a community development credential, particularly at the baccalaureate level*
- *Develop more competency-based programs that support a clear connection to work and career pathways*
- *Offer more non-traditional programs, including workshops in response to what people want to learn*
- *Explore models like the fellowship program that project-based learning*
- *Consider more work-based learning and coaching approaches to engage practitioners from the field in the teaching and learning process and ensure the courses being offered are closely aligned with specific, community-based issues and work.*
- *Look at different models for student recruitment and support that are community-based and provide recruitment, wrap-around services, career coaches, systems navigators, and other student supports. These services include establishing community mentors, internship and job identification and placement, academic counseling, cohort support and development, etc. They are essential services to ensuring successful program completion.*