

# **BUILDING THE ENGINE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN DETROIT: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CAREER PATHWAYS DECEMBER 2017**

*"...Remove "3-5 years" from the goal statement. We have to start acting now."*

--Comment from a 2017 BECDD Summit participant

## **RESEARCH CONDUCTED**

- Developed a "community development framework" to guide subsequent conversations with key stakeholders.
- Reviewed/analyzed existing labor market information to understand the current and future employment demand, as well as the competencies and credentials required for these jobs.
- Conducted, documented and analyzed results of
  - 8 local focus groups with 38 participants;
  - key informant interviews (10 conducted);
  - a practitioner survey (9 responses); and
  - a survey of educational institutions and programs (11 institutions, 16 responses).
- Documented and analyzed current local academic offerings that prepare people for entry-, mid- and senior-level work in community development
- Reviewed and analyzed non-academic local and national professional development programs.

## **FINDINGS BY THE PLANNING TEAM**

- There is a "values-set" necessary to be a successful community development practitioner, in addition to skills, experience and knowledge. How do practitioners acquire these values?
- Community development skill requirements are a hybrid of core skills plus skills acquired across allied sectors including urban planning, social work, public policy, public administration, real estate development and others.
- It is more likely that a community development career is possible if we understand that community development professionals are necessary in more than just CDOs, but also in other sectors including government, foundations, academia, corporations, research institutions and others. But this is not a widely-understood view and it is not yet clear if those allied sectors see the value-add in hiring credentialed community development professionals.
- The role of the community development organization – which affects how practitioners are, or should be, prepared – should also include "Sustained Advocate for the Neighborhood." This role is not currently part of the Phase One Community Development definitions.
- Overall employment demand in community development isn't projected to increase during the next five years if nothing changes. But data sources don't fully capture the current activity in the Detroit community development market that could influence demand. And we are in a "system building" phase which could influence demand for CD jobs.
- If demand were to increase, the areas to see an increase could include: Community Organizing, Advocacy, Workforce Development, Real Estate Development, Land Assembly, Land Transformation/Reuse, Green Storm Water Infrastructure; Beautification and Blight Removal.
- Factors are influencing the demand include:
  - competition for talent,
  - the variability of pay across allied community development sectors;

- the interest and priorities of the philanthropic community;
- the perceived power imbalance between neighborhood-level workers and resource providers.
- Hiring and promoting within the community development field is difficult because of:
  - unclear educational and work experience requirements for community development, particularly for entry- and mid-level opportunities;
  - limited support for training/mobility across allied sectors;
  - concern in the allied sectors about moving respected CDO leaders out of their roles;
  - misperceptions about the quality of skills and experience of CDO staff
- Some of the barriers to mobility across allied sectors include:
  - having clearly transferrable skills;
  - limited awareness of opportunities, including a lack of communication and coaching on community development opportunities
- The educational system has many building blocks in place for academic pathways in community development, but few connect in a cohesive pathway that serves learners entering through the community, through academia, or from work. The more direct pathways tend to be between Bachelors and Masters-level community development-related degrees
- 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.
- There appears to be no targeted institutional recruitment strategies for academic programs related to CDO fields especially for people living in the community. Targeted, grass root recruitment of people from the community to participate in the educational pathway is not developed.
- There appears to be no intentional entry-ramp for those entering the field through community – based volunteer work (entry level to mid-level work)
- There appears to be no way to assess and certify skills for work place learning that would lead to academic credit.
- A comprehensive support/navigation system that could result in a pipeline of grassroots, Detroit-based community development professionals, does not exist.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BECDD STAKEHOLDERS**

- ❑ **Create and commit to a five-year goal** to develop an integrated community development career and education pathway system for Detroit, with processes and tools that:
  - ✓ *enable people to acquire values, knowledge, and skills* to enter into and progress through community development occupations;
  - ✓ *ensure equity in employment* as a core value and commitment throughout the system; and
  - ✓ *promote mobility* throughout the various community development allied sectors.
- ❑ **Identify different academic pathways** for community development education and training programs and credentials, building on existing resources and programs in the academic and non-academic sectors.
- ❑ Provide customized support to help individuals enter the field and reach their CD occupational and career goals through an articulated **“navigation model.”**
- ❑ **Support professional development** opportunities for people already in the field

- ❑ **Facilitate mobility among the various community development allied sectors** by building cross-sector trust, collaboration and transferrable skills

## **Career Pathways Work to Still be Completed in 2018**

- **Further define the work functions, values, knowledge, and skills required** at entry-level, mid-level, senior-level community development job levels; and reconcile those with academic learning outcomes and credentials, as well as with employer requirements. **Identify and map a mix of non-academic professional development** and technical skill building opportunities, including mentoring, that all stakeholders would value.
- **Develop community development academic pathways** specific for entry and continuing support for: 1) neighborhood grassroots leaders; and 2) aspiring Community Development professionals of color in Detroit; **including one or two academic institutions willing to test these pathways.**
- **Develop a “Career Navigation” model** and implementation plan that would match individuals who want to enter and advance within the community development field in Detroit with the needs of CDO’s and other potential community development employers.
- **Create a value proposition**, marketing/outreach and messaging strategy for the community development field to promote:
  - ✓ entry and mid-level opportunities,
  - ✓ career progression within the field,
  - ✓ the importance of cross-sector partnerships and mobility
  - ✓ to generate interest in the community development field by prospective CD workers
- **Map existing opportunities and pathways for cross-sector mobility** between CDOs and other potential community development employers, including
  - ✓ identifying transferrable skills and
  - ✓ a mechanism for networking that enhances cross-sector relationship building and mobility.
- **Map opportunities to obtain tuition support** for various academic pathways **and funding support** for CDOs to provide professional development to their staff.
- **Additional research:** Who is currently trying to enter the community development field? What are their barriers to entry? Identify other/non-local programs that are increasing racial/ethnic diversity in the community development field and identify opportunities to emulate those programs.

## **SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AT THE SUMMIT (SEE FULL NOTES)**

- No objection to the overall direction, with the changes/additions suggested
- Add a SMART Goal for these recommendations
- Why is there a 3-5 year goal for this component? Why not 3? Or 2? Or no time-oriented goal at all? We have to act now and not wait. What policies and processes can we put in place NOW to support this goal? We can change our internal evaluations and job descriptions to support the recruitment of local people of color, we can change how we recruit.
- We need to really cultivate our young people. At the BECDD Forum in November the young people who spoke were so willing to “own” this work, if we would only listen and engage them. We must cultivate their innate sense of wanting to help their neighborhoods.
- Americorp and other similar programs should be utilized [**Response:** the Planning Team includes the LISC Americorp program and the Public Allies Americorp program, and we are now exploring ways for those placements to earn college credit]
- We have to find a way to equitably compensate and acknowledge the talents and skills of everyone – especially resident leaders – who provide their expertise, to help us reach our goal.

- We have to provide opportunities for residents to receive credentials in this work – residents who are already in leadership roles in the Grass Roots organizations or on the boards of CDOs
- “Acquiring values” doesn’t sit well. Doing work in this field means that practitioners come with that value set already. [Response: does that mean we ignore it? Is there a way to teach those values
- How many jobs/positions will there be in 3-5 years? Can we create an action strategy and goal around the number of CD jobs we want to create? We need to get a better handle on job demand in this field.
- Being to hire CD professionals on a sustainable basis is essential
- What role is the city of Detroit playing in this component? Where is WCCD District?
- Outreach and marketing: We have to do a better job of highlighting community development career choices. Be more explicit on the importance of CD career mobility among the various allied sectors, so residents can see the career options

### **KEY CHANGES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS?**

- Remove “3-5 years” from goal statement. We have to start acting now.
- The language around achieving equity in these career paths is inconclusive – make it more explicit
- Create a definition of a community development professional that is more inclusive