

Strengthening Baltimore's Workforce: Reflections and Lessons Learned

February 2017



The **Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative**
Partnering to Build a Stronger Workforce

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BWFC is also supported by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, the Walmart Foundation, the Hitachi Foundation and the Baltimore Integration Partnership.

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INTRODUCTION

Far too many Baltimore residents face tremendous challenges with regard to quality employment. Although there are strong areas of job growth at the high and low ends of the wage spectrum, the local labor market is producing a limited number of middle skill jobs that pay a living wage and do not require a 4-year degree. Meanwhile, many people in our communities lack the critical skills, requisite educational credentials and certifications, and access to networks that would allow them to obtain high-quality, full-time jobs that lead to financial stability. Additional barriers including inadequate transportation systems, unstable housing, poor-performing schools, encounters with the criminal justice system and past traumas, make the task of finding family-sustaining work ever more difficult.

This reality is reflected in the high numbers of adults and youth who are unemployed or underemployed. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, official unemployment rates in Baltimore City were 11.8% in August of 2010 and 6.9% in August of 2016. For African-American men age 20 – 54 in Baltimore City the estimated unemployment rate for 2015 was 16.6% and 30% were not in the labor force¹.

A number of nonprofit workforce development programs are providing a beacon of hope despite these challenges, through coordinated strategies and careful implementation – demonstrating that success in this labor market is in fact possible. For over a decade, members of the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative (BWFC) have supported a growing number of industry focused workforce development initiatives, and the outcomes are notable. Through these efforts, previously unemployed residents are getting industry recognized certifications and jobs with career advancement opportunities at impressive rates.

Core to the success of these initiatives is a common workforce development strategy that aligns the critical business needs of local employers in key industry sectors with the developing skills and talents of jobseekers. This strategy of choice is the industry-sector workforce development approach, often referred to as a “sectoral program” or an “industry partnership.” Baltimore has developed a number of initiatives utilizing this approach, and they are being adopted and expanded upon in other areas of Maryland.

This report highlights several of these initiatives, which BWFC has long supported, and offers recommendations on how they can be expanded ever further.

The Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative (BWFC) brings public and private funders together in support of efforts to advance the labor market prospects of unemployed and underemployed Baltimore City residents while meeting the needs of our region's employers for a skilled workforce. BWFC Members include local and national foundations, corporate donors as well as representatives of city and state workforce agencies. BWFC is hosted by the [Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers](#).

WHAT IS an industry-sector workforce development approach?

Members of the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative (BWFC) have helped promote and support an industry-sector workforce development model for over a decade. This approach is based upon the following core **strategic elements** applied by high performing “sectoral programs”:

- ✓ **Deep engagement with employers and stakeholders in key industry sectors to identify and effectively address labor force needs.** Effective engagement of employers typically involves significant ongoing participation in program design, curriculum development and oversight; active involvement as guest lecturers, mentors, site visit hosts, etcetera; cash and in-kind investments; provision of paid work experience and internships; and collaboration to enhance and track employment, job retention and advancement of program graduates. Strong relationships with employers provide a dynamic feedback loop that is critical for ensuring that programs are responsive to labor market opportunities and opens the door to mutually beneficial collaboration.
- ✓ **A focus on serving low-income and disadvantaged job-seekers and entry-level workers.** BWFC and its grantees prioritize the provision of free services to individuals who are experiencing poverty and struggle with a range of barriers to quality employment. Jobseekers and low-wage workers are the most important constituents of these initiatives, and a commitment to their wellbeing resides at the core of program strategy and mission.
- ✓ **High-quality programming that includes relevant skill development and industry-recognized certifications are that are in line with industry need and requirements.** Through employer partnerships and high quality program staffing, good sectoral programs develop industry expertise and relevance which is infused into the content and methodology of skills instruction. Participants are able to earn in-demand industry-certifications, licensure and/or college credits which enable their employability and ability to advance in careers.
- ✓ **Robust efforts to address personal and structural barriers to employment faced by jobseekers.** Effective sectoral programs assist participants by providing case management, access to comprehensive wrap-around services, supportive instructional approaches, peer groups, and more. These services may be provided directly by program staff or through a well-managed referral approach.
- ✓ **Rigorous job placement and post-program follow-up services.** In order to help achieve measurable employment outcomes for individuals, BWFC-supported sectoral programs work with employers to facilitate the placement of participants into quality jobs. They remain connected to employers and to program completers to provide assistance that enhances job retention and advancement after initial placement. Staying connected to former participants can be challenging, but the most effective programs dedicate resources to strategies that make this possible.

- ✓ **A focus on systems change efforts that work to address policies and practices that impede access to family-supporting jobs.** Sectoral programs that gain deep knowledge of labor market dynamics while developing core competencies for serving low income workers become uniquely positioned to influence the way institutions or groups of institutions operate on behalf of workers. Systems change efforts extend the benefits of training programs by impacting educational/training systems, employer practices, public policies and investments, or even the way that funders operateⁱⁱ.
- ✓ **Commitment to analysis of performance data and directing resources to practices and programs that demonstrate effectiveness.** BWFC and our grantees are committed to collecting high quality data about participant demographics and outcomes and using this data as a learning tool from which to make funding, program and strategy decisions.

Various studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this industry-sector workforce development approach, including the Aspen Institute's [Sectoral Employment Development Learning Project \(SEDLP\)](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, Public/Private Ventures' [Sectoral Employment Impact Study](#)^{iv}, and MDRC's 2016 [two-year impact study of the WorkAdvance](#)^v model. The evidence-based success of this approach has led to widespread uptake by nonprofit workforce providers across the country, by state workforce systems ([Maryland's EARN](#)^{vi} program is a great example) and by the US Department of Labor — the sectoral approach is well integrated into the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the primary legislation guiding federal workforce development funding.

Baltimore has truly played a leading role in this work, having spearheaded some of the first workforce initiatives in the country to adopt the sectoral approach – with a growing body of research to support its efficacy.

INDUSTRY-SECTOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN BALTIMORE

BWFC and its members provide financial and technical support to sectoral programs across a variety of industries. Target industries are selected based on their strength in the local economy, the availability of quality employment opportunities that match the skills and aspirations of un- and underemployed Baltimore residents and the potential for advancement along career pathways that lead to family-supporting jobs. Employers within these sectors are committed to partnering on the design, oversight and implementation of these efforts.

BWFC-supported employment efforts which adhere to the core sectoral model elements described above have been developed within following industries.

Chart 1: Target Industries

INDUSTRY SECTOR	INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP CONVENOR/TRAINING PROVIDER
Biotechnology	BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI)
Healthcare	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (with the Caroline Center, Saint Vincent de Paul, Bon Secours Community Works and Center for Urban Families)
Construction	JumpStart (Job Opportunities Task Force with Associated Builders and Contractors)
Retail/hospitality/food service	Saint Vincent de Paul of Baltimore's Next Course program and Humanim's Baltimore Elite Service Training
Green/environmental industries	Baltimore Center for Green Careers (Civic Works)
Manufacturing	Jane Addams Resource Corporation's Careers in Manufacturing (JARC)
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	Maryland New Directions' Maritime Transportation, Distribution and Logistics program
Information Technology	YearUp Baltimore and NPower

Baltimore began developing strong industry-sector workforce approaches when the Abell Foundation helped create the **BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI)** in 1996, and more local philanthropic and industry leaders came together to help launch the **Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare** in 2005 and **Project JumpStart** in 2006. Acknowledging initial successes from the Baltimore sectoral programs and similarly designed approaches in a handful of other cities, the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Hitachi and Harry & Jeanette Weinberg foundations collaborated to create the [National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#) (National Fund) in 2007. A primary goal of the National Fund was to increase investment in industry-focused workforce development strategies throughout the United States. Baltimore was one of the National Fund's first participating cities where private and public funders joined forces to collect and report participant outcomes data from emerging sectoral initiatives. Baltimore's workforce outcomes became part of a national data set that served as proof of concept for the sectoral approach and paved the way for replications of the model throughout the county including state-led grant programs such as Maryland's EARN program.

Initially, Baltimore's funders collaborative was an informal group that included the Abell Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. After joining forces and formalizing as the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative, a growing group of members worked together to attract over \$2.1 million in national funds for Baltimore's industry-sector workforce development. A combined grant from the National Fund and the [Social Innovation Fund](#) of the Corporation for National and Community Service were leveraged by the Living Cities-sponsored [Baltimore Integration Partnership \(BIP\)](#). The BIP, which engages with a range of Baltimore's private and public stakeholders aims to establish economic inclusion as the business culture of norm in the Baltimore region, supported Baltimore's sector programs through a Training Fund administered in partnership with BWFC. Together, these external grants leveraged local public and private investments and supported the expansion of the sectoral model into other industries in Baltimore. The Abell and Harry & Jeanette Weinberg foundations have been ongoing supporters of this work over many years, while the number of additional public and private investors has expanded steadily over time. Since its creation, BWFC has pooled and aligned over \$14 million in funds to support sectoral workforce strategies in Baltimore City.

EVIDENCE OF TRAINING THAT WORKS

Over the past decade, BWFC has collected program data to better understand the impact of Baltimore sectoral programs on the jobseekers that participate in their services. Data presented here reflects outcomes for 1,187 participants.

Notable Results

70-90% of participants successfully completed training and received at least one industry credential

72-93% of program completers obtained employment after training

68-95% were still employed after six months.

Typically, participant outcomes for workforce development programs are measured by rates of program completion or graduation, job placement, wages at placement and retention of employment. Chart 2 below shows participant outcomes data for six of the BWFC- supported sectoral programs.

Completion, Credentialing and Job Placement

In all but one of the programs for which training outcomes data were collected, 70-90 percent of participants successfully completed training and received at least one industry credential, 72-93 percent of program completers obtained employment after training and 68-95 percent were still employed after six months.

Chart 2: Participant Outcomes¹

Industry Sector	Program	Date of enrollment	Individuals enrolled	Completers	Completion rate	Number receiving industry or educational credentials	% receiving credential	Number placed in jobs	Placement rate (completers placed into jobs)	Number retained in jobs at 6 months	6 Month Retention Rate
Biotechnology	BTI- Lab Associates	2/2011 - 3/2015	144	103	72%	103	72%	79	77%	58	73%
Construction	JumpStart	1/2011 - 5/2015	411	332	81%	324	79%	247	74%	172	70%
Green Careers	BCGC	12/2012 -8/2015	209	185	89%	178	85%	153	83%	124	81%
Food service	SVDP Next Course	1/2013 - 6/2015	237	135	57%	129	54%	126	93%	38 (missing data)	30%
Transportation, Distribution, Logistics	MND- Maritime	3/1/2015 - 10/2015	138	112	81%	99	72%	94	84%	89	95%
Manufacturing	JARC	4/2015 - 12/2015	48	30	63%	47	98%	25	83%	17	68%

Impact on Wages

Industry-sector workforce programs supported by BWFC help most graduates obtain a job with a starting wage of \$12-18/hour. The following notes are important in order to put these rates into context.

- As per July 1 2016, the minimum wage in Maryland is \$8.75 and is set to increase to \$10.10 by July 2018.
- In July 2016, the [Living Wage Calculator](#) developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology^{vii} sets the living wage in Baltimore at \$12.33 for an individual with no dependents and \$16.48 for a household with two working adults and two children. These living wage rates indicate the minimum family-sustaining wage for full-time, year-round work.
- The majority of training program participants were unemployed at the time of enrollment. The sectoral programs supported by BWFC target industries that offer a starting wage that is significantly above the minimum wage and, in some cases, approaches or reaches the minimum threshold for a living wage. However, it is important to note that not all jobs reported are full-time and some are not permanent, particularly in sectors such as construction or hospitality where work can be cyclical. For many program completers, the first job obtained after training is considered a stepping stone to better jobs in sectors that offer opportunities for advancement. In the chart below, we show median hourly wages for occupations requiring less than a bachelor's degree but more than a high school diploma. These wages demonstrate the possibility for advancement in each

¹Chart 2 includes participant outcomes for entry-level jobseeker programs for whom BWFC has the most complete and accurate data. Dates of enrollment for cohorts included in the table differ by organization, reflecting the time period for which BWFC was collecting program data. Data for the Next Course culinary program reflect challenges during the first years of program implementation with managing an innovative open-entry/open-exit model, serving a particularly challenged population, establishing solid data collection protocols and contacting program graduates to collect information about post-training employment. In particular, it is possible that Next Course retention data displayed in the chart below undercounts individuals who remained employed but were not tracked. Over this data collection period, the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare focused most of its effort around on-the-job coaching for incumbent entry-level health care workers. BWFC has funded a separate study of findings from the BACH coaching initiative.

sector if individuals are successful in entry-level positions and are granted opportunities to advance through on-the-job experiences, further training and the availability of and access to higher paying positions.

Chart 3: Placement Wages²

Industry Sector	Program	Average Hourly Wage at Initial Placement*	Median Hourly Wage for Occupations Requiring Associate's Degree, Post-Secondary Award or Some College, less than a Bachelor's Degree -2012 ^{viii}
Biotechnology	BioTechnical Institute of Maryland-Lab Associates	\$13.92	\$33.55
Construction	JumpStart	\$12.00 – 13.50	\$40.91
Green Careers	Baltimore Center for Green Careers	\$15.50	n/a
Food Service	SVDP Next Course		\$47.91 (Hospitality and Tourism)
TDL/Port jobs	Maryland New Directions- Maritime TDL	\$12.09	\$44.14 (Transportation and Warehousing)
Manufacturing	Jane Addams Resource Corporation	\$16.33	\$36.36

In 2012-2013, BWFC worked with the Jacob France Institute (JFI) at the University of Baltimore to further our understanding of wage gains associated with these sectoral programs. JFI used Maryland Unemployment Insurance (UI) data on wages, employment and industry to look at wage outcomes for graduates of the JumpStart and BTI programs. The wage data were collected directly from employers by the Maryland Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) and recorded into the UI system. This analysis revealed that cohorts of participants in both the JumpStart and BioTechnical Institute of Maryland appeared to have strong and substantial wage gains of 90 – 160 percent above pre-program wages. When estimated in annual (four quarter) amounts, cohort median wage gains for those participants who had pre-program reported earnings reached \$7,000 and \$14,000 above pre-program wages for JumpStart and BTI respectively. The median wage gains were even greater for the many participants who were unemployed in the year prior to training. Participants in both programs showed up more frequently in wage records after program completion than before -- suggesting a strengthened attachment to the labor market. For both JumpStart and BTI, estimated wage gains in the first year post completion exceeded program costs.

² Wages listed in Chart 3 were reported to BWFC by programs in 2016. Average wages fluctuate over time. For several programs listed, 2016 rates are slightly higher than previous years.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Outcomes data from these Baltimore sectoral programs are even more significant when we take into account the scope of the barriers to employment that are confronted by most of their participants (see Chart 4). Over 80 percent of individuals who have participated in these programs were unemployed at the time of enrollment. For many, this unemployment has been long-term and intractable. For example, over half of the unemployed participants in the Maritime TDL program had been out of work for more than six months prior to enrollment, making their transition to jobs all the more challenging. Sixty-eight percent of the participants had a high school diploma/GED or less as their highest level of education, and more than half of participants had a criminal background that can limit access to quality employment opportunities.

Chart 4: Enrollees

Industry Sector	Program	Date of enrollment	Individuals enrolled	% with criminal background	% unemployed at enrollment	% w High School Diploma or less as highest level of education attainment	Program requires High School Diploma / GED for entry
Biotechnology	BTI- Lab Associates	2/2011 - 3/2015	144	6%	67%	55%	yes
Construction	JumpStart	1/2011 - 5/2015	411	75%	77%	76%	yes
Green Careers	BCGC	12/2012 - 8/2015	209	68%	91%	72%	no
Food service	SVDP Next Course	1/2013 - 6/2015	237	37%	89%	64%	no
Transportation, Distribution, Logistics	MND- Maritime	3/1/2015 - 10/2015	138	47%	90%	≈63%	yes
Manufacturing	JARC	4/2015 - 12/2015	48	61%	78%	67%	no
ALL			1187	54%	82%	68%	

These facts do not adequately describe the full range of barriers that many of these men and women must overcome in order to enter the labor market. The enduring impacts of structural racism have left many of the neighborhoods in which participants reside fundamentally disconnected from quality employment and educational opportunities. Participants commonly are faced with challenges related to inadequate transportation, past trauma, housing instability, lack of quality childcare, health concerns, math and literacy deficiencies, limited past work experience and difficulties meeting other basic needs for themselves and their families. Given that over 90% of participants were African-American, it is also important to note that many program completers were entering industry sectors, which historically excluded African-American workers from good jobs in the Baltimore region.

The integration of robust support services alongside high-quality free skills training is one of the hallmarks of the sectoral strategy supported by BWFC and its members. As part of the application and screening process, organizations assess applicants' needs for additional supports to manage barriers and determine a course of action for those who enroll. Each of these organizations also offers case management and/or counseling services to training participants. These case managers/counselors provide assistance in addressing personal and structural barriers to success ranging from much needed encouragement to deeper problem solving around personal issues.

Each program has developed a set of referral sources to which they direct participants in need of assistance with housing, childcare, mental health counseling and legal aid among other issues.

Through a new initiative of the Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, [One Baltimore for Jobs](#)

The enduring impacts of structural racism have left many of the neighborhoods in which participants reside fundamentally disconnected from quality employment and educational opportunities. Participants commonly are faced with challenges related to inadequate transportation, past trauma, housing instability, lack of quality child care, health concerns, math and literacy deficiencies, limited past work experience and difficulties meeting other basic needs for themselves and their families.

(1B4J), most of these programs have been able to connect participants to volunteer lawyers who help with issues such as expungement, housing, and credit and benefits concerns. Additional connections to clinical mental health services and Adult Basic Education and GED providers are also being strengthened through IB4J.

Supports to trainees are deeply interwoven into the very nature of how skills instruction is provided. For example, instructors operating within a high trust environment frequently serve as both content experts and mentors/coaches. Often, this is complemented by the use of peer support techniques that tap into the experiences and assets of participants to help one another, encourage persistence and enhance self-esteem. Classrooms within the programs are typically designed to serve as mock workplaces that follow industry norms with regard to policies such as attendance, dress code and even location and physical lay-out of the training facilities and several offer on-the-job experience through internships. In this way, workplace skills – often referred to as “soft skills” or “essential skills” – are not taught in the abstract, but are seamlessly integrated into the learning experience.

EXTENDING IMPACT THROUGH SYSTEMS CHANGE STRATEGIES

In addition to achieving high completion, job placement and retention rates for graduates, each of these sectoral programs also works to achieve other lasting changes. At their best, industry-sector workforce strategies engage in systems change efforts to address policies and practices that impede access to family-supporting jobs. Systems change efforts undertaken by sectoral programs on behalf of workers and businesses can relate to:

- educational and workforce development systems;
- employer practices; and
- public policy and investments.

At their best, industry-sector workforce strategies engage in systems change efforts to address policies and practices that impede access to family-supporting jobs.

In particular, the sectoral initiatives that BWFC has supported engage in efforts to change industry practices. According to a report written for the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, “systems change in the area of employer practices encompasses changes in the ways that employers provide low-skill, low-wage workers with opportunities for education or skill enhancement and/or career advancement, as well as changes in practices and policies that improve wages, benefits, or working conditions for these

workers.^{ix} In Baltimore, where issues of racial inequity have broad impact, these initiatives are positioned to enable employers to do business in an intentionally inclusive manner. Three programs, the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, JumpStart and the Baltimore Center for Green Careers have made particularly strong efforts to catalyze changes in industry practices:

Chart 5: Job Access and Quality Strategies

Sectoral Program	Changes in employer practices
BioTechnical Institute of Maryland	Changing the requirements for entry to laboratory jobs to make them more accessible to individuals without a college degree.
JumpStart	Expanding access to construction jobs and apprenticeships for African-American residents and individuals with criminal backgrounds through economic inclusion and local hiring efforts. Working through its fiscal and administrative sponsor, the Job Opportunities Task Force, to advocate for legislation that reduces employment biases against individuals with criminal records.
Baltimore Center for Green Careers	Raising job quality in the sector through a procurement intermediary strategy that expands business opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises while enacting employer-community benefits agreements that increase wages and eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with a criminal record.

CHALLENGES FOR EXPANSION

Though the data point to promising results, the scale and reach of these programs remain limited. The programs included in this study collectively serve fewer than 1,000 job seekers each year while tens of thousands of Baltimore residents are in need of assistance to obtain quality employment. The expansion of these efforts to serve a greater number of unemployed and underemployed Baltimore citizens is hampered by three primary challenges: 1) the need for greater sustained investment, 2) the number of quality jobs that are available and accessible, and 3) challenges to educating and preparing more individuals for entry into these programs.

The [Baltimore Regional Workforce Development Plan](#) developed by the Opportunity Collaborative^x with support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) makes the expansion of industry-led workforce development partnerships one of its core recommendations. For many years, philanthropy has been the major source of investment in these programs in Baltimore. More recently, new streams of support from public sources have played a critical role in expanding this work. From 2011-2016, the Federal Social Innovation Fund subgrant from the National Fund to BWFC provided funding for the industry-sector approaches described here. After extensive education, advocacy and policy work by BWFC, the Baltimore Integration Partnership and the Job Opportunities Task Force, in 2013, Maryland created [EARN-Maryland](#) to support the development of industry workforce partnerships throughout the state. Since its takeoff, EARN has been providing much needed resources to help expand the promising sectoral work already underway in Baltimore. In response to the community uprising surrounding the death of Freddie Gray, the Mayor's Office of

Employment Development was invited to apply for a US Department of Labor demonstration grant. MOED used the \$5 million grant to create the 1B4J program, supporting the work of 12 sectoral training programs while providing enhanced connections to young adults in distressed communities and coordinating the provision of basic education, legal and mental health services to participants. And a pilot expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education and Training program in Baltimore is enabling these programs to expand enrollment for individuals receiving SNAP assistance. Despite these positive developments, Baltimore leaders must continue to work to sustain and grow private and public funding to maximize the potential impact of these strategies.

Even with additional resources, sectoral programs need to carefully calibrate the scale of their training to the real demand for workers in the sectors in which they operate. Overexpansion of workforce programs can fail if the number of graduates is significantly greater than the number of training-related job openings. Stakeholders, policymakers and investors must explore opportunities for increased investment in these effective workforce strategies while also aligning economic development activities to grow demand for local talent. This involves attracting and engaging more companies and local businesses that are committed to inclusive hiring practices and that provide middle-skilled jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits. Simultaneously, sectoral programs must continue to work with other stakeholders to advance systems change strategies that improve job quality and access. This alignment between economic development priorities and job training must also consider the regional nature of the Baltimore labor market and address the significant limitations of existing transportation options that connect Baltimore residents to regional job centers.

Unfortunately, far too many jobseekers do not meet the threshold for entry into these programs. Individuals assessed with very low numeracy or literacy skills, those who lack a high school diploma, or those presenting with substance use and mental health concerns or criminal histories are often deemed unready or ineligible.

Overcoming the third challenge to scale – outreach to and preparation of more unemployed and underemployed Baltimoreans – requires additional innovation and systems integration. Presently, many adults and youth who attend initial recruitment events for these effective workforce programs do not end up enrolling, and many more never hear about these opportunities in the first place. The latter is perhaps a problem of outreach and information sharing which could be addressed through better connections to neighborhood and faith based groups as well as additional marketing efforts. But the fact that so many people do not make it from a first orientation to enrollment is a more complex problem. Typically, programs screen and assess candidates before enrollment. Done well, screening helps fill limited training slots with individuals that have the aptitude, interest and qualifications that best match training and employment opportunities in target occupations. This helps ensure that scarce training resources are used wisely and that individuals are not set up to fail. Such screening may involve assessing a person's fit with an occupation – for example, a person who has no interest in providing patient care to the elderly probably is not a good fit for a Geriatric Nursing Assistant program and a person who despises outdoor work may not be a good fit for a landscaping career. For youth who have not had prior work experience or exposure to the range of

career options available to them, commitment to training for a particular occupational sector can feel limiting and premature. Usually, screening also involves math and literacy assessments, criminal background checks and drug testing. For the programs documented here, these assessments are designed to line up with the requirements of employers as well as the ability of programs to provide effective remediation.

Unfortunately, far too many jobseekers do not meet the threshold for entry into these programs. Individuals assessed with very low numeracy or literacy skills, those who lack a high school diploma, or those presenting with substance use and mental health concerns or criminal histories are often deemed unready or ineligible for such programs. In Baltimore, where approximately 1 in 5 adults lack a high school diploma, approximately half of neighborhoods are classified as “high incarceration” communities^{xi}, and exposure to traumatizing experiences have had deep impacts on so many adults and youth, workforce development actors are hard-pressed to serve many who are in need. While some attempts to address this issue have been made through the development of academic bridge programs and the practice of referring people to other types of service providers, the scale and complexity of this problem is still difficult to attack and demands significant attention.

In order to make these programs available and successful for a greater number of community members, support of ongoing efforts in key areas of related policy and practice is critical. This includes the advancement of criminal justice reform, expansion of mental health and addiction services, development of services targeted to disconnected youth, and greater investments in best-practice models for Adult Basic Education and GED services. Work to expand the reach of workforce development practices also requires a sustained commitment to deep engagement with the communities most impacted by these issues.

A FEW TAKEAWAYS

- Workforce strategies that follow a robust sectoral model are yielding positive results for participants in terms of program completion and job placement. They are also engaging in important systems change efforts that aim to extend the impact of their workforce development efforts and, in some circumstances, incentivize labor markets and employers to adopt improved job quality and job access practices. The maintenance and growth of these approaches can enable Baltimore employers to actively participate and directly contribute to strategies to address historical racial inequities.
- All seven of the core strategic elements are essential for success and require funding support. They include 1) deep employer engagement in industry sectors, 2) focus on low-income/disadvantaged workers, 3) high quality training that results in industry-recognized certifications, 4) integrated and comprehensive strategies to address personal and structural barriers to employment, 5) job placement and post-placement follow up, 6) a systems change approach and 7) a commitment to data collection, assessment and quality improvement. Non-profit groups and community leaders that are working to launch new

sectoral programs should make efforts to incorporate these elements, whether on their own or through partnerships with existing organizations. Adoption of a complete sectoral strategy by emerging groups may require technical assistance and support from investors.

- Placement into entry-level jobs through these interventions is a very valuable first step, but ongoing support is often necessary to assist working adults in their efforts to retain employment and to advance into jobs that offer more sustainable annual incomes, enable individuals to build wealth and move into to the middle class.
- Considering the full scope of community employment needs, existing programs operate at a much smaller scale than what Baltimore requires. Bringing these programs to a larger scale will require increased and sustained investment in workforce programs, coordinated economic development and planning efforts to grow the number of good and accessible job opportunities, and a commitment to expanding approaches that help more individuals prepare for and enter into these effective workforce programs.

APPENDIX

MORE ABOUT PROGRAM STRATEGIES

BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI) (www.biotechmd.org)

Since 1998, BTI has been helping a non-traditional group of jobseekers to enter the booming biotech sector as Laboratory Technicians. Created in partnership with local employers who sought to identify talented and committed technicians from communities close to their business locations, BTI has worked to change the industry paradigm of employing only bachelors- degreed-and-above individuals. The group has opened the occupation to more Baltimore residents by demonstrating that individuals who complete its certificate level training program become highly valued employees with positive job retention rates. BTI works with its employer partners to screen candidates, develop relevant curriculum, and prepare un- and under-employed candidates as reliable, specially-skilled workers. BTI is able to place its graduates in career-launching positions with a variety of employers. BTI offers two aligned programs that are free of charge to participants and are provided in a supportive environment: first, a 6-week bridge program known as BioSTART designed to advance participants' skills and knowledge in basic math, communication, and professional development taught in a bio/lab-based context; and a second and more intense component, the 12-week BTI Laboratory Associates training, which provides the academics and practice in critical industry-related and bench skills necessary for success in the field. Participants receive extensive personal support and are assisted by a Case Manager from Catholic Charities of Maryland. The Laboratory Associates program includes a required 100-hour, paid internship. Through an articulation agreement with Baltimore City Community College, successful completers are eligible for 6 credits toward an AAS degree in biotechnology. Committed employer partners participate in a variety of aspects of the overall mission and activities including curriculum development and review, expert instruction, cash and in-kind donations, recruitment of internship hosts and employers of BTI graduates, and serving as Board members and expert advisors.

Project JumpStart (www.jotf.org/Programs/JumpStart)

Administered by the Job Opportunities Task Force in collaboration with Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), JumpStart provides a an 87-hour pre-apprenticeship construction training program that provides intensive classroom and hands-on training. The curriculum includes plumbing, carpentry and electrical skills as well as essential safety training, financial coaching, connections to supportive services and driver's education. As a trade association representing a large number of construction businesses, ABC is able to keep the program aligned with current industry need. ABC offers JumpStart to its business members as a resource for implementing local hiring programs and community benefits agreements. While enrolled in JumpStart, participants dealing with personal barriers to employment can access Case Management services through Catholic Charities and assistance to acquire cars through the Vehicles for Change program. The goal of the program is to launch graduates into career pathways in the sector including apprenticeship programs in a range of trades careers. For its participants, most of whom are African-American and many have had some past experience with the criminal justice system, this program plays a very important and intentional role in breaking down barriers to jobs in construction that had long been less accessible to people of color from low-income Baltimore communities. This approach also helps companies implement strategies to diversify and localize their workforce. The Jobs

Opportunities Task Force, which is the administrative and fiscal home to JumpStart, is an advocate for state legislative and policy change on issues impacting low wage workers in Maryland, and has had successes in helping pass new laws that make it easier for individuals who have criminal backgrounds to obtain employment.

Civic Works' Baltimore Center for Green Careers (BCGC)

(<http://baltimoregreencareers.civicworks.com>)

Civic Works created the Baltimore Center for Green Careers in 2003 as a way of contributing to environmental sustainability while creating pathways out of poverty for Baltimore residents. In evaluating prospects for an employment strategy, the organization discovered that growing “green” industries offer opportunities to earn family-sustaining wages without a 4-year college degree in occupations in weatherization, brownfields remediation and solar installation. The focus of BCGC’s work has been on dismantling barriers that prevent access to these jobs for the Baltimore residents it serves. To do this, BCGC has adopted a three-pronged strategy involving 1. high-road business development, 2. hands-on and certification training for new entrants into the industry, and 3. on-the-job training for incumbent workers. BCGC programs do not require a high school diploma and there are no numeracy or literacy requirements for enrollment. BCGC is expanding the number and scale of good businesses in the green sector through the relationship between its Retrofit Baltimore business development program and a group of contractors that have agreed to adhere to good labor practices as set forth in community workforce agreements. Through Retrofit Baltimore, BCGC aggregates the demand for services from individual consumers and secures large contracts for green projects, and then allocates the work to contractors in its network. With its ability to direct work to the contractors that are committed to meeting wage requirements and giving fair consideration to workers with a criminal background, BCGC is changing industry standards related to job access and quality. These contractors also hire workers who have completed BCGC’s skills training and have earned multiple certifications in one of the three sector-based career tracks: brownfields remediation, residential energy efficiency, and solar energy installation. Each energy efficiency and solar energy student receives two months of on-the-job training through the weatherization social enterprise and partnerships with solar employers.

Next Course (<http://www.vincentbaltimore.org/our-programs>)

A project of Saint Vincent de Paul of Baltimore, Next Course provides free culinary training to low income Baltimore residents. Next Course operates in conjunction with Saint Vincent de Paul of Baltimore’s social enterprise Kidz Table. On a daily basis, Kidz Table supplies over 11,000 healthy prepared meals to head start programs, daycares, shelters, and after school programs throughout the Baltimore region. Students in the Next Course program receive on the job training at Kidz Table after completing culinary skills training and while receiving robust services to help overcome personal barriers to employment and prepare to work in a demanding food service job. Participants have the opportunity to obtain the ServSafe Food Handler Certificate and the ServSafe Manager Certification. Next Course is a member of the Catalyst Kitchen network, a national group of service-based social enterprises that help people develop skills for a life-changing career. A significant number of Next Course students are referred into the program by the Department of Social Services.

Maryland New Directions: Maritime Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (Maritime TDL) Program (<http://www.mdnewdirections.org/maritime-transportation-distribution-and-logistics-training.html>)

The Port of Baltimore is the second-largest port on the eastern seaboard by gross tonnage and supports a significant number of enterprises related to export/import activities, cargo handling, trucking, railroads, distribution centers, and more. Through its Maritime TDL program, Maryland New Directions has created a new on-ramp to jobs in this lucrative sector for Baltimore workers. MND serves as a community liaison for the Port of Baltimore and the Maritime Transportation Industry and provides training to jobseekers who, prior to the establishment of this program, had little to no access to these opportunities. The training program, developed in collaboration with port employers, includes 30 hours of industry specific hard skills training and 60 hours of Soft Skills training. The hard skills training includes the following focus areas: Logistics and Freight Forwarding, International Customer Service, Internal and External Port Handling, Safety Procedures at the Port, Material Handling and Warehousing and Distribution. Qualified candidates received their TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential), the security clearance needed for employment at the Port of Baltimore, and select candidates receive forklift training and certifications. As part of the program, participants are taken on a port tour where for what is likely the first time, they are able to see the bustling set of port activities that are out of view to the general public. This exposure is an important aspect of helping Baltimore residents envision a future in the maritime and TDL sectors. With the assistance of the BWFC, MND has been able to receive funding for this initiative from the Walmart Foundation. The Walmart grant has facilitated a partnership between MND and Cecil College (providing commercial truck driving training) in order to provide a more robust set of workforce solutions to TDL employers in the region. Both the MND and Cecil College TDL industry partnerships have also received funding through the Maryland EARN program.

Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC) (<http://www.jane-addams.org/programs/jarc-baltimore>)

In 2015, BWFC members collaborated to help bring the JARC Careers in Manufacturing program to Baltimore. JARC was founded in Chicago in 1984 and has years of proven success in helping individuals to succeed in careers in the manufacturing sector while aiding manufacturing businesses to remain competitive through access to talent and business improvement services. In Baltimore, JARC is now training men and women for careers in welding and computerized numerical control (CNC) machine operation through its fast-track programs. Graduates attain industry-recognized credentials through the American Welding Society (AWS) and the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS). Jobseekers who need a boost in shop math and other basic skills before they are ready for the CNC or welding programs are able to start in JARC's Fundamentals of Manufacturing program. JARC is guided by an active Industry Advisory Council made up of Baltimore-area manufacturing employers who have come together to seek solutions to their workforce needs and are committed to opening opportunities to employment for Baltimore's workforce. JARC-Baltimore plans to build on early successes by offering on-the-job incumbent worker training to local companies, thereby further enhancing business productivity while creating opportunities for worker retention and advancement along career ladders.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data - 2015

ⁱⁱ More information on the topic of systems change and sectoral workforce programming can be found in the publication: Soricone, Linda. *Systems Change in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*. National Fund for Workforce Solutions, November 2015. <https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Systems-Change-in-the-National-Fund-120415.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ The Sectoral Employment Development Learning Project (SEDLP) of the Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategy Initiative. <http://www.aspenwsi.org/our-work/sedlp/> Results of the SEDLP research appear in research reports that discuss the methodology used and provide an overview of the outcomes; in-depth case studies of each of the organizations participating in the SEDLP; and policy papers that benchmarked findings about participants in the six programs against findings from other well-known studies of workforce development demonstrations.

^{iv} See Maguire, Freely, Clymer and Conway. *Job Training That Works: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study*, Public/Private Ventures, May 2009. <http://knowledgecenter.completionbydesign.org/sites/default/files/33%20Maguire%202009.pdf>

^v See Hendra et al. *Encouraging Evidence on a Sector-Focused Advancement Strategy, Two-Year Impacts from the WorkAdvance Demonstration*. MDRC, August 2016. <http://www.mdrc.org/publication/encouraging-evidence-sector-focused-advancement-strategy-0>

^{vi} EARN Maryland is a state-funded, competitive workforce development grant program that supports industry-led workforce partnerships in key economic sectors throughout the state of Maryland. Several of the sectoral programs described in this paper have been designated as EARN Industry Partnerships. See <https://www.dllr.state.md.us/earn/>

^{vii} The Living Wage Calculator was first created in 2004 by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier at MIT as a way of calculating the basic living expenses of families. See <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/24510>

^{viii} See Seals, Chris for the Opportunity Collaborative. *Baltimore Regional Talent Development Pipeline Study*. Baltimore Metropolitan Council, October 2013. Page 11. <http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/assets/BaltimoreRegionalTalentDevPipelineStudy.pdf?74a21f&74a21f&536869&ae56d8>

^{ix} See Soricone, Lisa. *Systems Change in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*. National Fund for Workforce Solutions, November 2015. <http://nfwolutions.org/sites/nfwolutions.org/files/publications/Systems-Change-in-the-National-Fund-120415.pdf>

^x See *Strong Workforce, Strong Economy: Baltimore Regional Workforce Development Plan*. Baltimore Metropolitan Council, March 2015. <http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/workforce-plan/>

^{xi} For more thoughts on a strategy for assisting Baltimore's returning citizens to access employment after incarceration, see *Opening Doors to a Second Chance*. Coalition for a Second Chance, Greater Baltimore Committee, December 2016. <https://gbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/GBC-Coalition-For-A-Second-Chance-Report-December-2016.pdf>