

RESEARCH | BRIEF

Organizational Network Study of the Baltimore Integration Partnership

Phase 2: Assessment of Community Perspective

OCTOBER 2016



What is the Baltimore Integration Partnership (BIP)?

A collaborative partnership of Anchor institutions (Anchors), funders, nonprofits, and public organizations focused on establishing economic inclusion as the business culture of norm in the Baltimore region.

In This Brief:

- Project Background
- Goals and Strategies
- Methods
- Tone of the Interviews
- Summary of Findings
- Themes and Recommendations
- Opportunities

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Project Background

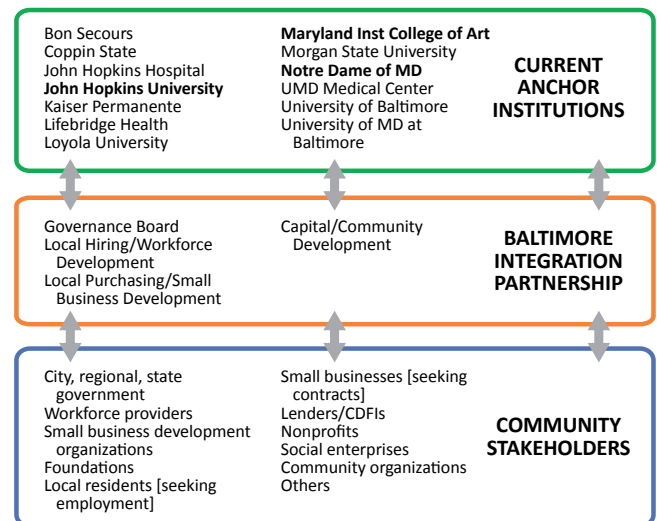
In coordination with the Baltimore Integration Partnership (BIP) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), the University of Colorado Denver's Center on Network Science conducted an organizational network study to assess the ways in which the BIP partners collaborate with one another, as well as with local businesses, residents, and community-based organizations. The two year project identified how economic inclusion for local and minority businesses and low-income residents is being enhanced by the BIP network, where gaps exist in the work, and areas where the BIP can strengthen the work.

This project has three phases of evaluation:

- Phase 1. Assess Anchor Activities & Feedback
- Phase 2. Assess Community-level Perspectives on Needs & Feedback
- Phase 3. Measure Connectivity of the System (including Anchors, Community Partners, BIP)

This Research Brief contains Phase 2 Results

The BIP was created to advance economic inclusion in Baltimore and has focused over the last several years on growing the roles and ways anchor institutions can improve opportunities for area residents, business, and communities through hiring, purchasing, and reinvestment. The Anchor interviews that were conducted during Phase 1 of the evaluation findings indicated that BIP connections to the community are weak. The second phase of evaluation sought to explore these connections from the community perspective.



BIP's Goals and Strategies

The evaluation and findings were framed and organized around the BIP's 3 Goals and 4 Strategies. This Phase 2 Brief is focused on Goals and Strategies 1 through 3. Strategy 4 is discussed in the Phase 3 Brief.

Goal 1: To connect local, small and minority-owned businesses to anchor procurement opportunities in Baltimore and the region. **Strategy 1:** Removing barriers to facilitate the participation of local/small/minority business in anchor purchasing.

Goal 2: Encourage and leverage anchor real estate investment for the intentional benefit of the broader community and small businesses. **Strategy 2:** Leveraging and supporting anchor real estate investments and small business investment to intentionally maximize benefit for surrounding communities.

Goal 3: Insure equitable opportunities and connect low income residents to jobs within anchors and anchor-supporting businesses. **Strategy 3:** Removing barriers to access and training for increased hiring of local and minority residents by anchors and anchor supporting businesses.

Strategy 4: Proving the overall business benefit of economic inclusion policy and practice, ultimately creating a model for other industry sectors to adopt.

Evaluation Questions

Overall, the evaluation sought to assess system strengths, barriers, and opportunities. Each phase of the evaluation was specifically guided by the following questions:

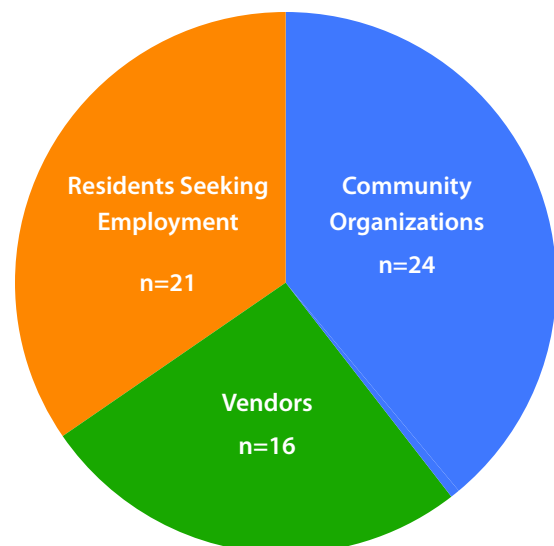
1. How is Economic Inclusion implemented within the Anchors?
2. What parts of the system are strong and weak? What are good examples? What are the barriers? What is innovative?
3. How is this system interconnected? Which parts of the system are impacted by which factors?

Methods

How Did We Collect Data?

From November 2015 to March 2016 UCD evaluators conducted **61 interviews** with various community agencies/organizations that represented workforce development and local/minority/women owned businesses (community organizations), vendors, and residents seeking employment. Initial connections were made through four key-informant interviews; a snowball sampling strategy was implemented thereafter. Interviews were transcribed, coded by themes, and summarized.

Who Did We Talk To?



What Did We Ask Them?

We asked the community organizations, vendors, and residents a variety of questions to understand their perspectives in terms of feasibility, barriers, and capacity for people and businesses in Baltimore to find work at Anchors.



Tone of the Interviews

These were two of the most salient and striking themes that consistently emerged across all the interviews:

Structural Racism: Examples of inequalities in power, access, opportunity and treatment are heard throughout the interviews.

“ Stop the stereotyping. All people are not alike. Everybody deserves a second chance. And stop the racism. ”

- Baltimore Resident

Culture of Helping: Across all the interviews, people who live and work in Baltimore are committed to the city, to helping one another and to finding solutions to the city's problems.

“ ... I never thought things could happen the way that they have. I'm talking every single step of the way where we got to know somebody, opened up and said yes. When we thought we couldn't somebody said we could, or, 'I'm going to help you.' ”

- Local Vendor

Summary of Findings

Interviews with agencies, vendors and residents revealed strengths and weaknesses in the system.

- The greatest strength is that there seems to be buy-in from the Baltimore business community in implementing solutions and economic inclusions policies within their own companies by, for example, hiring minorities and low skill workers. Some workforce development agencies adopt a whole person approach to successful employment which includes case management and coaching. Vendors and community organizations see this investment at an individual level as important and a promising avenue towards economic inclusion. While some vendors and community agencies are taking this on, we can not say that all are working in this way or that they are doing it effectively.
- The biggest gaps exist in making connections with Anchors. Entry to and navigation of Anchors is difficult.

Interviewees offered the following recommendations for Anchors to broaden their impact and strengthen their ties to the community by developing:

- Partnerships with agencies and organizations that can serve as conduits between Anchors and the community and which would be based on trust, transparency and an authentic desire to engage partners in a meaningful way.
- Policies that allow small business to compete fairly for Anchor contracts.
- Improved accessibility to available jobs by, for example, reverse engineering and improving online job portals.



Interviewee Quotes:

“ [Anchors] appreciate ... [and] need someone who's responsive when something goes sideways. That we can provide something quickly without charging them more money, we don't really charge like an extra delivery fee or something of that nature. We just do it. That's what we're here for. In [an] agency that still values that, [that] is why it goes well. ” - MBE Vendor

“ One of the greatest challenges [is] to be put in a category that is MBE. There is a stigma associated with being certified that - the only time people call you is when they have to call you. Otherwise they are not interested. ” - MBE Vendor

“ [Prime contractors] will look at the project and decide how they're going [to] use the consultants to complement the team and also supplement with their own in-house capabilities, so that we are on ... contracts where we spend a lot of time during the proposal process and awarded as part of [a] team. Then we never see a shred of work. ” - MBE Vendor

Goals/Strategies 1 & 2: Procurement/Capital Investment

Strengths & Challenges Identified by Interviewees

Strengths

- Interviewees see that **personal relationships** are the key to **understanding** client needs, having **knowledge** of upcoming project opportunities, and learning how to **navigating** the system.
- When Anchors are **creative** in parsing contracts, it **opens opportunities** for the small business community
- It is helpful and validating when purchasers **assess** work based on **value** vs. just cost
- **Support from small business agencies builds vendor capacity**
- The small business community provides **mentorship** & advising to one another
- Small business is intentionally implementing **economic inclusion** in their own hiring

Challenges

- Few personal relationships exist and it is tough for vendors to find out about available jobs; **Entre** to Anchors is very difficult
- **Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)/Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) certification** can be a hindrance; duplicated systems are cumbersome
- **No system** of shared resources among Anchors; Anchor efforts are siloed
- **Lack of opportunity** to be the prime on a contract
- Vendors have varied capacity to **execute the job**; Variations in capacity to work with Anchors
- Anchors have lengthy **payment schedules**
- **Few resources** for small business development & training; Few **capital** resources for small business
- **Inauthentic** partnerships (e.g. MBE as sub-contractors, not getting work); Dishonest practices

Community Driven Recommendations

Find ways to “**level the playing field**” - weed out any harmful shortcuts that are currently employed in the contract selection process

Support small businesses in **understanding the system** of working with Anchor institutions

Participate in central, consolidated sites for posting all available contracts (one example is Rocky Mountain Bid), and include clarification to Anchor’s policy, processes, and requirements

Ensure each Anchor department has a complete list of MBE/WBE certified vendors

Parse out larger projects into **smaller jobs**

Raise the limit necessary to not have to bid out contract work

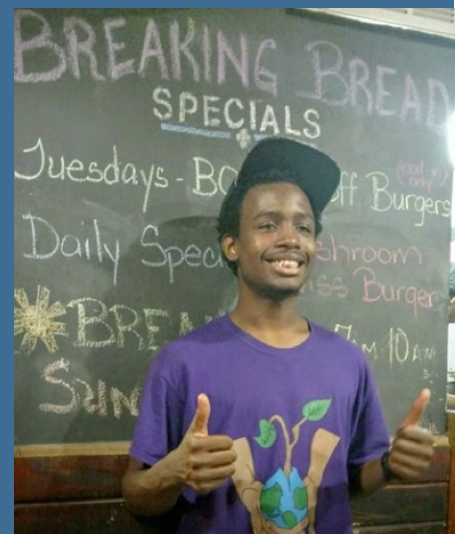
Support **capacity building training** for small business

Build relationships between anchor institutions and Baltimore business community, business development programs and accelerators

Consider how small business intermediaries or government partners can accelerate work and link with economic development resources

“...We should look at ways to begin; and maybe don’t do it right off the bat. So for instance, [if one particular Anchor] turned around right now and said, “Okay, we want one small vendor in Baltimore to supply us all our paper supplies.” That vendor would die because they have no working capital. They don’t have the ability to service that contract. However, if we said, “Let’s see how we can do 5 percent the first year, and over time grow both the company, and the [Anchors’] requirements would then transfer to that smaller company locally.” Because what that does is it creates a job. It creates an opportunity for that company to grow. If that company grows, they’re hiring people. Those people can go buy houses. They can help improve the City’s programs that are here.”

- Workforce Development Agency



Photograph used by permission Breaking Bread Restaurant, Baltimore 2016



Interviewee Quotes:

“ We need intermediaries that are reverse engineering from actually job opportunities. Right now we just train people and send them to training programs that lead to nowhere ... Maybe they are not coming to the training program since it is leading to nothing. We need reverse engineering. Tell us what you want to do so that employees can be trained for those specific positions and you hire them. ” - Workforce Development Agency

“ I think all the anchor institutions, if they really want to hire locally, they are going to have to really get down into the weeds of how hiring takes place and change some of those behaviors or some of those protocols that requires the managers to prioritize local workers. ” - Workforce Development Agency

Goals/Strategies 3: Workforce Development

Strengths & Challenges Identified by the Community

Strengths

- Some Workforce Development (WFD) agencies recognize the need for a **whole person** approach
- Some **partnerships** between agencies & Anchors already exist
- When a WFD agency can act as a **conduit** between employers & potential/new employees, it **improves job placement outcomes**
- There are improved outcomes for employees when there is **mentoring** & employer **support** on the job, as well as, more educational opportunities

Challenges

- There are not enough partnerships between Anchors and WFD agencies; inequitable access to funding for agency support
- Applicants are unaware of jobs available & how to apply; they have limited access to technology
- There is a lack of systems of support for residents seeking work (pathways and navigators)
- Stereotypes
- Criminal backgrounds
- Reports of mistreatment & racial discrimination
- Challenging job requirements; need for transitional work and skills development opportunities such as paid internships
- Some Anchor policies have not yet been revised to take a race equity lens (enabling access for all) and in turn can create barriers for those seeking employment
- Need policies & practices that ensure employees keep jobs, such as job coaching and mentoring
- Once employed, residents need continued education & counseling

Community Driven Recommendations

Partnerships between Anchors and WFD agencies provide agencies with direct connections to available jobs, resources in the community, and understanding what partners need

Anchors to go **into the community** to build partnerships, **connect to employers** (bringing employers to the WFD agencies, identifying market needs directly from employers, customize training)

Elevate the role of WFD agencies as **brokers** between people and institutions

Anchors could improve online **search accessibility** of available jobs through their job portals

Partnerships with WFD agencies would provide comprehensive services/**case management**; follow-up with employers after employee placement. All parties could explore opportunities in the community and among Anchors to provide funding for these extended services to employees.

Focus on returning citizens; creative opportunities for **record expungement**. Review Anchor policies for adjustments that would allow for more job opportunities for returning citizens

Fight stigmas and implicit bias through community organizing approach and targeted training

Focus on job experience through **internship** and other **gateway programs**

Explore how anchor students and employees can play supporting roles in the education/job readiness gaps of city residents

"I have a sense of what [Anchors] do, but the actual hiring process seems intimidating ... because of not having [relevant] background."

"To get a job at [an Anchor] ... - because I have been applying on my own - I really feel though, on my own, I don't have anything to stand on, and it's hard getting in the door. But since [help from a WFD agency]...I have a better chance..."

What Are the Opportunities From What We Learned?

STRONG DESIRE TO PLAY

Community agencies and vendors were forthright in their desire to be included in the conversation and take part in a process that is representative of the diversity of Baltimore and which seeks to explore avenues to creating an economically healthy and inclusive community.

UNTAPPED RESOURCE

Community interviewees expressed that they tapped into other community members for resources and to get/give support. From mentoring by vendors to reverse engineering by work force development agencies, and even the support that residents seeking employment give to one another, there is a wealth of untapped resourcefulness and goodwill in the Baltimore community.



The Strength of Leveraging all Viewpoints

What did we learn from anchor institutions?

When we asked anchor institutions about implementing economic inclusion in their policies, we learned that there is a demonstrated desire from leadership to implement economic inclusion throughout the institutions and a shift in organization culture.

What did what we learn from the community?

The community interviews highlight strengths and barriers, from their perspective, on what implementation of economic inclusion looks like “on the ground.”

Bridging the Divide

Bringing together these two viewpoints on the issue of economic inclusion is a chance to explore points of convergence, connections, areas of innovation, ranges of opportunity and a move towards economic growth for all of Baltimore’s citizens.

Together these interviews highlight the disconnect that sometimes exists between Anchors and WDAs, vendors, and residents. Anchors have the commitment to economic inclusion but may be unaware of the barriers and unintended consequences of their policies, as well as, the untapped resources mentioned above. Likewise, by virtue of being small organizations, community agencies and vendors are able to be more flexible and creative than Anchors in finding and implementing solutions. Fostering dialogue between Anchors and the community would allow for greater understanding of each other’s perspective and hopefully lead to opportunities for change.

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