CAREER 360:
AN EMPLOYER-LED APPROACH TO BRIDGING THE OPPORTUNITY DIVIDE

I GOT THE JOB!

INTERVIEW CHECK IN

MEASUREOF**AMERICA**
of the Social Science Research Council

LeadersUp
The Future at Work

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INTRODUCTION

On April 18, 2017, LeadersUp, a talent development intermediary, in partnership with Measure of America, a research and advocacy project of the Social Science Research Council, launched the LeadersUp Career 360: Innovation Lab to engage business leaders, young adults, and community-based organizations working with Chicago's youth. They gathered to explore demand-driven approaches to curating career pathway opportunities and building the supportive functions employers need to retain and advance young adults in career pathways.

Through focused design sessions, the Innovation Lab engaged participants to:
(1) Understand and unpack barriers hindering practitioners from preparing young adults for employability and to innovate solutions for empowering young adults through training;

(2) Introduce and share learnings about LeadersUp's employer-informed employability framework: the P.O.W.E.R. skills curriculum and discuss the ideal workforce readiness profile for participants;

(3) Highlight the unique assets of key stakeholders and brainstorm new solutions to calibrate programs, enhance practices, and work together as a talent force ecosystem to achieve the threshold for workforce readiness;

4) Solidify a go-forward strategy for each entity that will commit to gateways for faster, broader, and more impactful outreach and support of Chicago's Opportunity Youth, including its hardest-to-serve young adults.

Chicagoland's business community is facing a significant talent divide; companies are unable to find workers to fill their vacancies and are continuously searching for a skilled workforce. LeadersUp believes that Opportunity Youth, young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are out of school and out of work, are one piece of the solution. The Innovation Lab provided an opportunity for various stakeholders, employers, community-based organizations, and workforce providers, to come together and discuss how preparing and connecting the next generation of talent to demand-driven career pathways can tilt the trajectory towards career opportunities and jobs for young adults living in Chicago's toughest neighborhoods. Our team worked throughout the day to capture the insights generated through the design working group sessions. This report summarizes those findings.

DISCONNECTION: A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUE
What is "human development" and how do we measure it?

Our priorities shape how we define success and measure progress as a society. The human development and capabilities approach **puts people at the center** of measuring progress. Human development is about improving people's well-being and expanding their choices and opportunities to live freely chosen lives of value. In other words, human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live[1]. Capabilities, defined as what people can do and what they can become, are the equipment one has to pursue a life of value, and they are developed from birth onwards, ideally through adulthood[2]. The most basic (and measurable) capabilities we have are good health, access to knowledge, and a decent material standard of living. These three capabilities are measured by the American Human Development Index (AHDI).
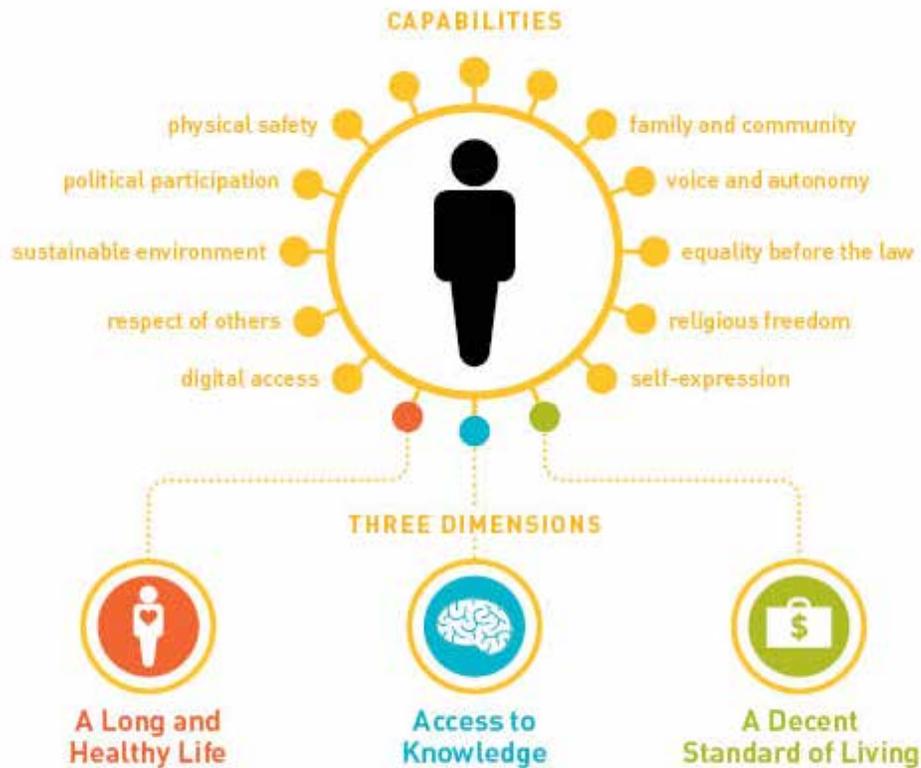
Source: www.measureofamerica.org

1 Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps. The Measure of America 2010–2011: Mapping Risks and Resilience. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
2 Ibid.

The timeframe of young adulthood is critical in developing the capabilities required to live a good life. Through school and work experiences during their late teens and early twenties, people develop "…knowledge and credentials, social skills and networks, a sense of mastery and agency, an understanding of one's strengths and preferences, and the ability to handle stressful events and regulate one's emotions, to name just a few."[3] From a human development perspective, the opportunity to fully develop those capabilities through school and work is essential; **therefore youth disconnection is also a human development issue.**

Young adults who are disconnected from the worlds of school and work do not have the same opportunity as connected young people to develop the essential capabilities mentioned above. Disconnected youth are more likely to live in poverty, have disabilities, and are less likely to earn a high school or college diploma. Youth disconnection not only limits the development of capabilities, but is itself the result of constrained capabilities: like a decent standard of living, freedom from violence, and access to quality schools during childhood are helpful—if not essential—to develop the networks and the wide range of soft and hard skills needed to successfully start a career. At work, young adults develop skills such as conflict resolution and communication, create relationships and connections through networking, and earn financial independence. All of which expand their capabilities and multiply the possibilities of what these young adults can do and be - later in life. **This is why youth disconnection feeds into a cycle of disadvantage; those who did not have the same opportunities to fully develop their capabilities in childhood are cut off from the pathways to continue developing the capabilities required for a productive, fulfilling, and independent adulthood.**

YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Today in the United States fewer young people are disconnected from school and work than were before the Great Recession. The good news is that almost 900,000 fewer young people are disconnected. The bad news is - from this point forward - tackling disconnection will be even more of an uphill battle.

According to Measure of America's research and recently released report, "Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps: Youth Disconnection in America," the 16% drop in disconnected youth over five years—from 14.7% at the peak of the Recession in 2010 to 12.3% in 2015—is certainly cause for celebration, but it is partly due to a recovering economy. **After the high school and college graduates who found themselves unemployed in the midst of the recession — returned to the workforce — those who remained disconnected continue to face bigger barriers and find it difficult to reconnect.**

Disconnected Youth
4,881,500
young adults ages 16 to 24

52%   48%

POVERTY

41%
live in a poor household

EDUCATION

4%
highest degree is bachelor's

YOUNG MOTHERHOOD

28%
women with children

DISABILITY

15%
with a disability

Connected Youth
34,826,700
young adults ages 16 to 24

51%   49%

POVERTY

27%
live in a poor household

EDUCATION

8%
highest degree is bachelor's

YOUNG MOTHERHOOD

7%
women with children

DISABILITY

5%
with a disability

Source: "Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps." Measure of America, http://www.measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2017/

3 Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis. Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps: Youth Disconnection in America. http://www.measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2017/

WHERE DOES CHICAGO STAND?
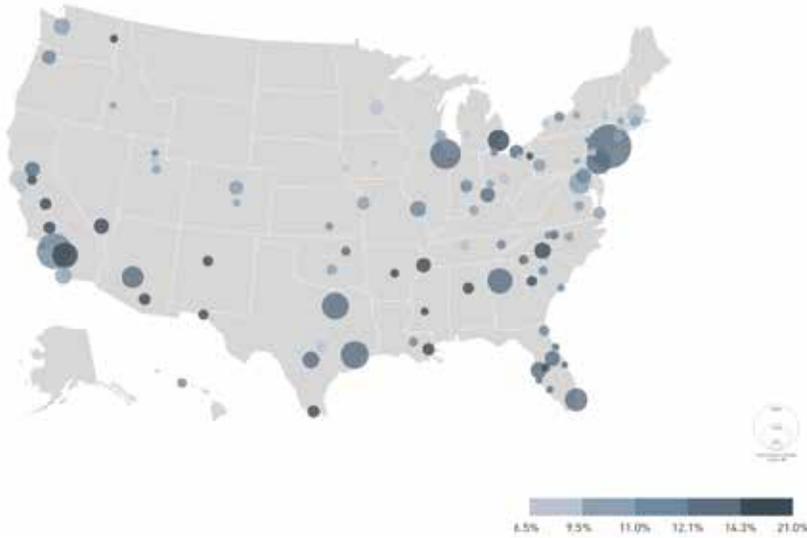
In the Chicago metropolitan area today, about 140,000 young people are neither working nor in school—roughly 12.1% of the city's youth population. Chicago's youth disconnection rate is comparable to the national rate of 12.3%, and even lower than comparable cities like New York (12.2%), Philadelphia (12.9%), Atlanta (13.6%) and Houston (13.7%). However, this metro area-wide rate only tells part of the story.

Source: "Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps." Measure of America,
http://www.measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2017/

Like many American metropolises, **Chicago remains racially and economically segregated.** It is no surprise that youth from different racial and ethnic groups have vastly different outcomes. Only 8.2% of young, white Chicagoans are disconnected—lower than the group's national disconnection rate of 10.1%. Latino youth are disconnected at a rate of 12.2%, very close to the city-wide rate, and lower than that of Latinos nationally. On the other hand, at 22.9%, African American youth in Chicago have the highest disconnection rate of any racial group in the 10 largest US cities. The map below shows youth disconnection by neighborhood in the Chicago metro area. Lighter colors represent higher rates of youth disconnection; darker colors represent lower rates of youth disconnection.
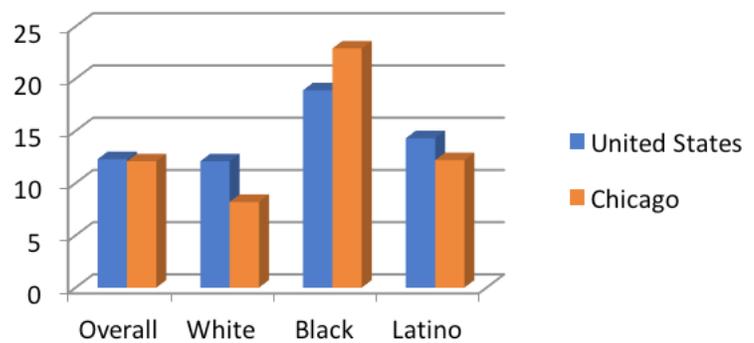
Both race and place matter. Chicago's neighborhood-level rates of disconnection range from an impressive 2.9% in Lake View and Lincoln Park, to an astounding 33.2% in South Lawndale and Lower West Side. The 140,000 disconnected young adults who are disproportionately poor have faced multiple exposures to adverse childhood experiences. They live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, have substandard public transportation, are parenting young children, live with disabilities, and are exposed to violence.
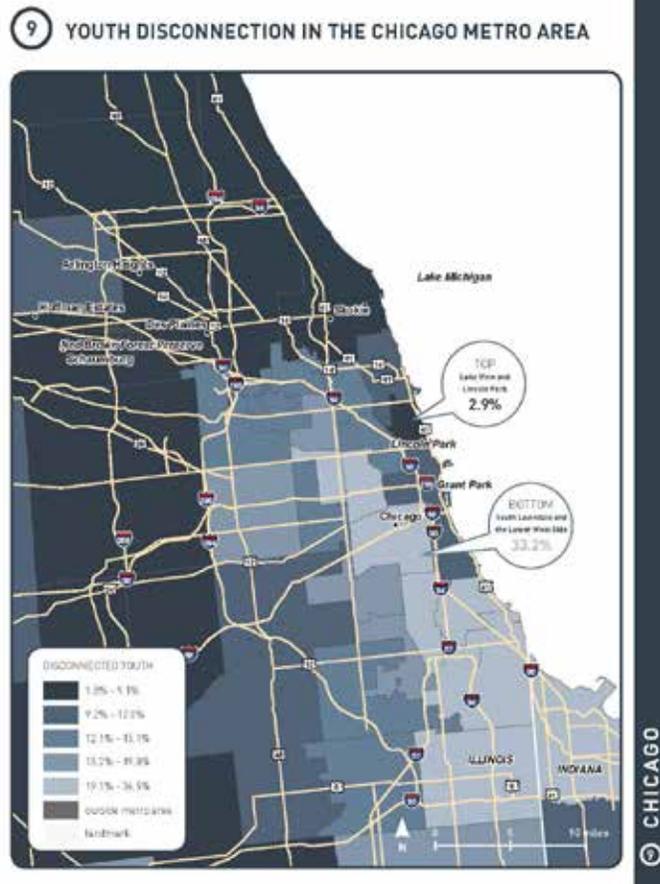
Source: Halve the Gap by 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities, Measure of America.

Chicago lags behind other major cities in terms of lowering the rate of youth disconnection. The rate decreased from 13.3% in 2010 to 12.1% in 2015, a slower rate of progress than that seen at the national level. Latino youth saw significant improvements in their rates of disconnection; however African American young adults saw little progress.

Chicago has made some progress, but not as much as other metros

	All Disconnected Youth	Black Disconnected Youth	Latino Disconnected Youth	White Disconnected Youth
2010	13.3%	24.0%	16.1%	8.1%
2015	12.1%	22.9%	12.2%	8.2%

Source:www.measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2017

REACHING THE HARDEST TO RECONNECT

Though most disconnected youth face significant barriers to opportunity, some groups experience additional barriers to reconnection. With a focus on four distinct populations: justice-involved young adults, homeless young adults, young adults with disabilities, and single parents; LeadersUp curated the Innovation Lab experience to provide a platform for all stakeholders to unpack the barriers young adults face when entering the workforce. Measure of America guided participants in a design session to examine the unique workforce needs, assess the landscape, and strategize on methods to address the challenge of connecting young adults to career opportunities. The Innovation Lab provided us with key takeaways and workable solutions in the areas of career readiness, career connection, and career advancement.

CAREER READINESS

A core challenge that was discussed by all stakeholders was that of career readiness. We learned that there is a system failure at the beginning of the road for young adults who wish to enter the workforce. Numerous obstacles in service delivery; resources; and capacity gaps amongst governmental, educational, and workforce entities - exacerbate the persistent challenges young adults face when seeking a career.

Educational institutions, workforce providers, government resources, and community-based organizations must first come together and set a common goal of career development—especially for the more vulnerable sub-populations—and *then* begin to align programming with local labor market trends so that all efforts are informed by industry *and* customized to meet demand. So far this has been extremely challenging, because even though there have been many discussions about what constitutes workforce readiness, no shared definition has been developed. As a result, there has been little forward movement in preparing young adults with the skills needed to be successful in the workforce. As we continue to move forward and promote programs that develop career readiness skills in young adults, it is important to make sure that client-specific needs are matched with opportunities, programs for young adults are properly designed, and that outcomes are mutually beneficial for young adults *and* employers.

CAREER CONNECTION

The next phase of career pathways discussed at the Innovation Lab was career connection. Our discussion focused on improving trust and transparency among employers, young adults, and system providers to address implicit and explicit biases that can cause tension and hostility. A further development of this discussion was how to increase awareness, accessibility, and the availability of resources and utilization among young adults. By working together, employers and service providers who intervene to promote an integrated continuum of support and safety nets - can increase career connection among disconnected young adults. The career connection process can begin in the onboarding and training stage if employers make young adults aware of the employer-specific career pathway opportunities and connections they already have established with services providers. Furthermore, establishing clear systems of communication between HR and front-line managers in the hiring, onboarding, and on-the-job training process increases career connection, as does the development of people-centered progress indicators, practices, and performance measures that extend beyond productivity.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The third and final phase is career advancement. In order to achieve the "triple-bottom-line" which is the nexus where businesses meet talent demand, young adults are connected to viable career pathways, and communities are transformed, we agreed to generate solutions to support young adults *before and after* they get a job. By providing young adults with the necessary resources, they are able to progress in their careers as well as increase connections and make positive contributions to their communities.

DISCUSSION & LESSONS LEARNED

This section provides insights from the design session and highlights how interactions between stakeholders affect the progression of young adults along the career pathway continuum from career readiness through career advancement. The central theme is one of trust and transparency; it impacts how all stakeholders identify resources, provide services, communicate employment opportunities, and navigate institutions. Beyond capacity gaps in providing stronger supports for career readiness, career connection and career advancement, these lessons highlight a need to coordinate amongst entities and repair challenges in institutional alignment and service delivery while cultivating trust and transparency in order to bridge the Opportunity Divide.

SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT

Young Adults

For young adults, the most common issue was a lack of awareness, knowledge, and access to critical and basic resources such as food, housing, childcare, transportation, and healthcare. Despite the availability of these resources through service-providing agencies, young adults across all groups expressed a lack of engagement and trust as the largest barrier to addressing their needs. One young adult expressed that they neither seek nor consider opportunities that are marketed towards them via flyers or digital media, saying, "I don't look at any of it." However they would partake in opportunities if supported by a trusted family member or counselor in their network. The theme of trust appeared constantly during the multitude of topics discussed in the Innovation Lab. Young adults expressed that *stereotypes, assumptions, and biases* contributed to their distrust and reluctance in engaging with institutions. For example, one young adult felt frustrated and misled after being rejected from one employer due to their criminal background, but were then offered a job with another employer in the same industry. Therefore, connecting with young adults via trusted networks and caring, relatable mentors - is central to effectively connecting them to opportunities.

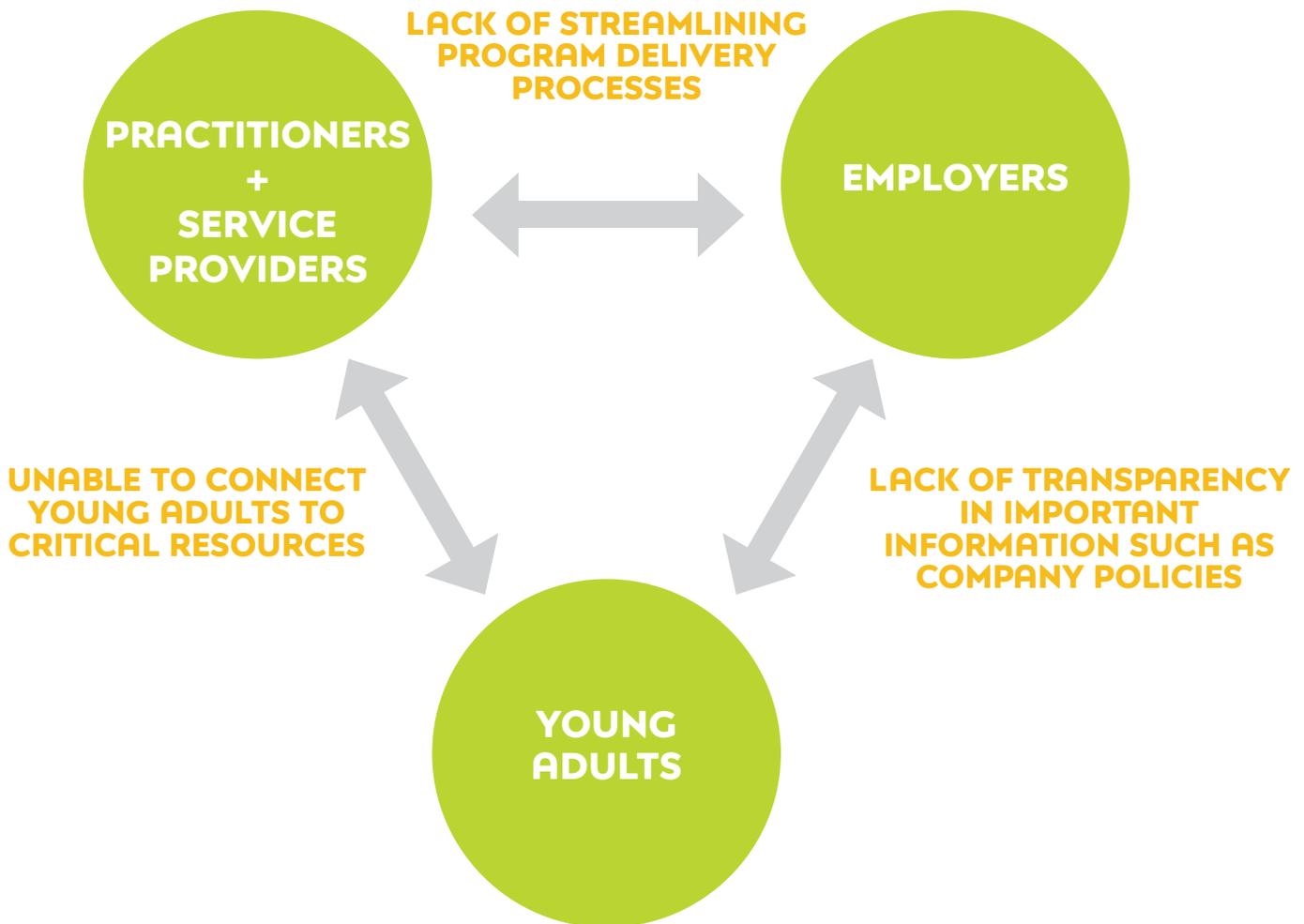### *Practitioners/Service Providers*

For practitioners, the *lack of streamlining in-service delivery,* especially as it relates to career pathways, appeared to be the largest issue. Young adults described their experiences with service institutions as "inadequate, limited, and disconnected." One young adult described committing to a work-training program, only to discover that the employer was no longer accepting applications. Many young adults shared experiences that indicated a gap in resources and unmet expectations. The discussions highlighted a critical need for service providers and practitioners to work with public and private entities to address gaps and provide young adults the services they need to continue successfully along their career pathways.

Employers

For employers, *a lack of transparency and mutual understanding* between management and employees was a primary theme. While management expressed a desire to be flexible and generous in addressing work-related issues among young adults if they were "honest and genuine," young adults experienced inconsistencies including questions related to past convictions, despite the current "Ban the Box" policy in Illinois. Moreover, despite being routinely addressed by employers, many young adults in the Innovation Lab expressed a lack of awareness of workplace policies that could directly affect their employment status. Such examples highlight a disconnection between employers, employees, and even service providers. Transparency and understanding not only comes up in tangible situations such as job applications and workplace policies, but it also highlights the need for employers to engage in a culture of trust and care in engaging with today's generation of talent.

TRUST, TRANSPARENCY & CONNECTION

Young adults, service providers, and employers all play a critical role in establishing successful career pathways. The lack of trust and transparency across these relationships is paramount to understanding sources of disconnection. Mistrust among young adults not only limits the accessibility of resources via service providers, but also affects cultural and relational dynamics in the workplace where young adults may be reluctant to engage. Moreover, a lack of transparency intensifies the mistrust young adults feel when information gaps have negative outcomes such as attending a work training that failed to deliver on job promises or being terminated for lack of awareness of company policies. As expected, the lack of trust and transparency affects all parties negatively because it creates pockets of disconnection along career pathways. The following chart summarizes the main points of disconnection that were discussed by young adults, service providers, and employers during the Innovation Lab.

PRACTITIONERS + SERVICE PROVIDERS

LACK OF STREAMLINING PROGRAM DELIVERY PROCESSES

EMPLOYERS

UNABLE TO CONNECT YOUNG ADULTS TO CRITICAL RESOURCES

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN IMPORTANT INFORMATION SUCH AS COMPANY POLICIES

YOUNG ADULTS

Addressing points of disconnection begins by understanding the contributing factors. For service providers, connecting young adults to available resources requires a deeper understanding of how to connect with their trusted networks. Moreover, transparency in processes and streamlining programs can help reduce the distrust and frustration experienced by young adults working with providers. It is critical for practitioners and employers to be adequately trained and informed about how to explain processes and policies to young adults to increase transparency and mutual understanding. Due to the cyclical and interconnected nature of these disconnections, it is important that all stakeholders implement practices that are rooted in both creating and enhancing a culture of trust and transparency.

Bridging the Opportunity Divide: Career 360

LeadersUp Career 360 is a new, multi-level and cross-sectoral experience designed to connect industry to the community through career pathway development and exposure. It combines innovative problem solving, postsecondary credentialing for the hardest-to-serve young adults, and a talent force movement that meets the current needs of labor market demand. Career 360 launches with the Innovation Lab to construct workable solutions to the most pronounced challenges impacting young adults in Chicago's toughest neighborhoods. The event culminates with the Career 360 Summit that provides young adults with the opportunity to explore new, viable opportunities within Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL) sectors and secure full-time careers with notable Chicagoland employers such as C.H. Robinson and FedEx.

CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The entire process surrounding Career 360 —from the Innovation Lab to the Career 360 Summit—focuses on understanding the talent needs of employers, helping equip young adults with the skills they need to be work-ready, and then bridging the divide between employers and work-ready young adults. The Innovation Lab allowed us to better understand the challenges faced by young adults entering the workforce and brainstorm creative solutions around these challenges by bringing together the various stakeholders: young adults, service providers, and employers.

From there, LeadersUp conducted numerous Winning in the Workplace (WiW) training labs which provided an opportunity for young adults to participate in a one-day experience where they could: have resumes reviewed, practice mock interviews, create a LinkedIn page, and learn other skills necessary to enter and persist in the workforce.

The Career 360 Summit is the culminating point where young adults and employers are brought together—only this time, the employers will be conducting on-site interviews for positions within their organizations. While the Career 360 Summit is the highlight of the entire Chicago Career 360: The Experience, it is not the end of the work in Chicagoland. Going forward, the learnings from and solutions discussed during the Innovation Lab must continue to be implemented to ensure that Chicago's hardest-to-reach young adults are being equipped with the skills necessary to be work-ready and connected to viable career pathway opportunities. We hope that, going forward, models such as Chicago Career 360 help solve the human development issue of youth unemployment and disconnetion, and that new initiatives like this generate more solutions for bridging the opportunity divide.

About LeadersUp

Established in 2013 by the Starbucks Coffee Company and some of its leading U.S. suppliers, LeadersUp is a 501(c)(3) talent development intermediary that was founded with the belief that a network of employers intentionally cultivating, recruiting, and retaining young adults can significantly impact youth unemployment and the Opportunity Divide challenge. LeadersUp works with employers, community-based organizations, and local leaders in Chicago, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area to create talent pipelines that connect young adults to career pathways and meet the entry-level to middle-skill hiring needs of businesses.

Website: www.leadersup.org

About Measure of America

Measure of America is a nonpartisan project of the nonprofit Social Science Research Council founded in 2007 to create easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well- being and opportunity in America and stimulate fact-based dialogues about these issues. Through reports, interactive websites, and custom-built dashboards, Measure of America works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of highest need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time.

Website: www.measureofamerica.org
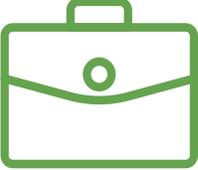
APPENDIX 1

PARTICIPANTS

8 YOUNG ADULTS

2 COMMUNITY COLLEGES

9 EMPLOYERS

6 COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

6 WORKFORCE PROVIDERS

4 RESEARCH & POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

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CROSS-CUTTING THEMES & LESSONS LEARNED

System and Institutional Failure – Defined as capacity, service delivery, and resource gaps amongst government, education, training and workforce entities that exacerbate persistent challenges in achieving work readiness.

- Set a common goal of career development for all vulnerable subpopulations.
- Create flexible, efficient resource delivery processes amongst education, training and workforce providers.
- Enforce workforce policies that integrate a soft skills-based approach regarding how public subsidies are allocated to employers.

Target Outcome: Career Readiness

Trust and Transparency – Defined as pronounced distrust, both implicit and explicit, that produces biases, separation, and hostility between young adults, employers and system providers.

- Employers and service providers work together to intervene early and often to promote an integrated continuum of support and safety net services for young adults.
- Establish people-centered progress indicators and practices that extend beyond "productivity."
- Adjust hiring practices to control for biases in the most critical points of onboarding: application, interview, and on-the-job training.
- Establish clear systems of communication between HR and front-line managers.

Target Outcome: Career Connection

Triple Bottom Line (Mutual Benefit) – Defined as the nexus where businesses meet talent demand, young adults are connected to viable career pathways, and communities are transformed.

- Employers to provide young adults with clear, articulate career pathway maps.
- Provide career counseling in collaboration with community-based organizations (CBOs).
- Collaboration between employers and institutions to ensure young adults are aware of the resources available to them and what is required to advance potential career pathways.
- Create resources in conjunction with employers and institutions to provide young adults with information about local resources to aid in career advancement and upskilling as well as employer-specific pathways.

Target Outcome: Career Advancement

APPENDIX 3

SOLUTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Community-Based Organization (CBOs)
- Set a common goal of career development for all vulnerable populations such as homeless youth, youth with disabilities, justice-involved youth, and youth who are raising children.
- Align programming with local labor market trends so planning and performance are industry-informed and demand-driven.
- Beyond transportation, childcare and housing - provide young adults with the necessary resources to advance within their careers. Currently there is a deficit in mentorship and trauma-informed care (mental health services) in supporting young adults at work.
- Provide career counseling services to help young adults think more deeply about their career trajectories and to map their own career plans.

Education and Training Institutions
- Provide portable skills training informed by industry, stackable credentialing opportunities, and blended learning models for ease of access.
- To support in-school learning, connect with employers that provide internships and career opportunities to students - especially those who offer work-based learning, apprenticeships, trainings, or even jobs with flexible scheduling.
- Offer a continuum of consistent professional development and basic work readiness skills and later -provide upskilling through modes like LinkedIn Learning that increases competitiveness within careers.

Employers
- Provide young adults with clear, articulate pathway definitions that include associated wages and competencies (upon hire) to better promote a positive career mindset.
- Provide career counseling and wraparound services in collaboration with community-based organizations. Many times employers are apt to identify problems early but with little means to address them - young adults can slip through the cracks. We have to consider "first responder training" for employers and provide them with resources to access community and health support for young adults.
- Track learning and professional development gains and link them to employment and promotion outcomes - so that young adults feel that their work is being rewarded.
- Establish people-centered progress indicators and practices that extend beyond "productivity" so that a sense of humanity is restored to the work place. Young adults, especially now, want to feel connected to their employers and to their managers because they don't want to compartmentalize their work, as it is a core part of their holistic identities.

Government
- Enforce workforce policies that integrate a soft-skills-based approach with how public subsidies are allocated to employers so companies can seamlessly access resources.
- Launch partnerships with employers, service providers, and public systems to amplify resource availability and to encourage wider participation and greater adoption of career building programs.
- Create population-specific and community-based support networks that young adults are aware of and feel comfortable accessing.
- Achieve a better "fit" by matching client-specific needs with opportunities. Employ career assessment, strength finder and aptitude tests in order to understand what would be the best mutual relationship between a young adult and an employer.