

Unity Opportunity Collaborative

15-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

133



**UNITY OPPORTUNITY
COLLABORATIVE**

Partnering to provide education and workforce development.

A partnership between Emerge Community Development, the Minneapolis Urban League, Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis Adult Education, and Stairstep Foundation.



Graduates of a Digital Foundations program at EMERGE

Table of Contents

Letter from the Leadership	3
Historic Year for Equity	4
Our Progress	5
Our Participants	8
Our Partners	9

Letter from the Leadership

As we look back on this past year, we are amazed by the leaps forward that have been made. Our participants have been exposed to services that we could not have offered without the collaboration of so many organizations and the support of the state. Our communities have been injected with new energy by the increased activity.

And we, the organizations that make up the **Unity Opportunity Collaborative**, have expanded our offerings for a diverse spectrum of participants, across a range of organizational specialties and experiences.

In this report, we share our progress for the first 15 months of this effort.

There are the testimonials of those we serve, which will shed light on the circumstances they are coming from, and how UOC and its services have helped them on that journey to remake themselves and reignite their ambitions.

We also offer a selection of our events, partnerships and collaborations among community-facing organizations, through which we seek to grow even deeper roots and attract participants among the hardest to reach populations - which are often those who have the most to benefit from our services.

And through it all we will offer the figures and numbers that we have gathered.

Hopefully this shows you what we at UOC know is true: That we are making an impact in a way that no other group or initiative has been able make. We are not just chipping away at racial economic disparities - we are impacting the systemic issues that make those disparities a reality. Individuals have hope for a better future. Communities feel invested in. And organizations have been given a renewed sense of mission and an injection of vitality from one another and from the state that backs us.

We have much more to do. But this first 15 months has been an unqualified success story. And with the momentum from those early wins, we will continue to grow, to adapt and most of all, to serve.

Sincerely,

Mike Wynne
President & CEO
EMERGE

Cindy Booker
Executive Director
Sabathani

Carlye Peterson, Director
Adult Basic Education
Minneapolis Public Schools

Alfred Babington-Johnson
President & CEO
Stairstep Foundation

Steven Belton
President and CEO
Minneapolis Urban League

A Historic Year for Equity

Minnesota has many things to be proud of, but the gulf in progress between racial groups is not one of them. Those leading or living the struggle for equality in the post-Civil Rights Movement era have been saying some variation of the same thing for decades: The deck is simply stacked against people of color. The obstacles to their success create a cyclical pattern of under-advancement, under-representation, and underachievement.

A few years ago, in the midst of a national conversation on race and equality, policymakers in Minnesota came to agree with that analysis. Late in 2015, Minneapolis Senators Bobby Joe Champion and Jeff Hayden began a community dialogue around the concept of equity in employment and workforce development. That dialogue eventually led to a \$35 million appropriation for equity in workforce development and training across the state, with \$4.25 million allocated to the Unity Opportunity Collaborative, an exciting partnership of five organizations in the Twin Cities, to specifically address the needs of African Americans and persons of African descent.



The UOC brings together the leadership, expertise, and experience of Emerge Community Development, the Minneapolis Urban League, Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis Adult Education and the Stairstep Foundation in an effort to reduce employment disparities and provide greater opportunity for those who want to improve themselves and strengthen their futures.

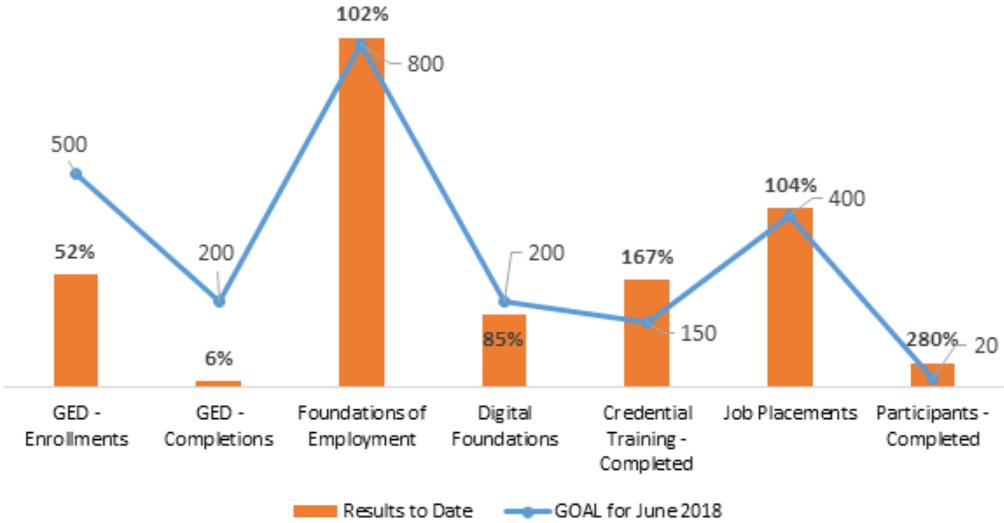
This past year has shown that the state's efforts have had—and will continue to have—an impressive return on investment. The acknowledgement of past wrongs and present inequities has fundamentally changed the relationship between the state and these underserved communities, and the injection of funds has yielded concrete, measurable results. This has been an historic year in the state's journey towards equity. And through the past 15 months the organizations of the UOC have been at the forefront of this journey. Whether one looks at our progress towards our goals or at our ever-growing, ever-deepening relationship with the communities we serve, the UOC has proven its efficacy and solidified its role as an agent of change in these communities

Our Progress

We set out on this initiative knowing that we needed goals as something to motivate our hard-working staff and volunteers, and to hold ourselves accountable to our backers and participants. So, the UOC’s member organizations, along with the Department of Employment and Economic Development, decided what metrics we would measure, and what would constitute a success for us.

So, how much progress have we made towards accomplishing what we set out to accomplish? Here’s the short answer: With a year and one-quarter of data in, and with goals that span a two-year timeline, we have *exceeded our ambitions in four of the seven service goals* we set at the outset of this initiative; are within arm’s reach of meeting another goal, halfway towards meeting a sixth, and will need to pick up the pace to achieve the seventh goal.

Progress at 15 months toward 2 year goals



And just to be clear, we’re not done yet. We’re just past the halfway point and still gathering steam.

Our Progress

GED Completions

The UOC has offered **262 people** the opportunity of a second chance at the job market, this time armed with a high school diploma equivalent. So far, only **12** have completed their programs and earned their GEDs. But with so many presently enrolled, those numbers are expected to rise as they complete their programs.

Foundations of Employment

Through the UOC's Foundations of Employment program, **817 people** have gained the skills necessary to navigate the job market. They are now adept at finding job postings, identifying opportunities that they should pursue, and preparing for interviews, and polishing up their application materials.

Digital Foundations

Thanks to the UOC's Digital Foundations training, **169 people** can now utilize online job-finding and career building resources, opening up new avenues for professional development and growth.

Credential Training

The UOC's career credentialing programs have helped **251 people** access the resources necessary to earn industry-recognized certificates that can open up a world of opportunities.

Job Placements

With the UOC's resources, **417 people** got job placements, and can now focus on learning from their new jobs and eventually on using those placements to launch more ambitious career goals.

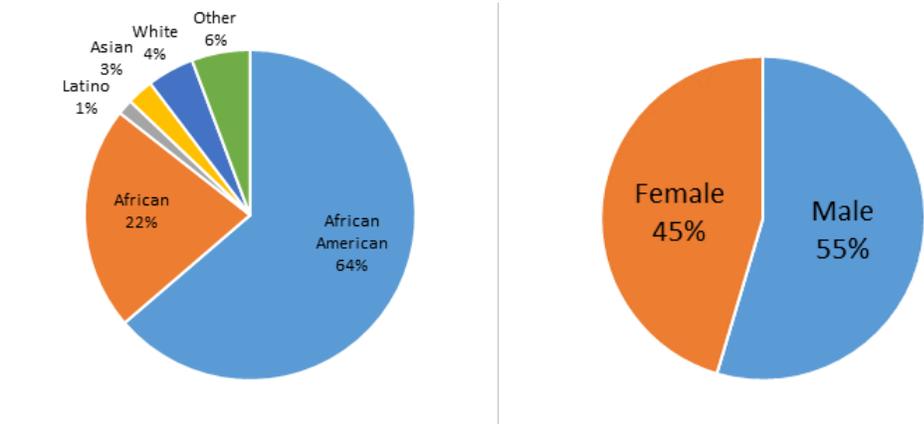
Transitional Employment

The UOC's member organizations have led **56 "difficult-to-employ" individuals** through transitional employment programs, helping them overcome major obstacles such as lack of a work history or a criminal background. Without transitional employment opportunities, such as those offered at EMERGE's social enterprises, they can become trapped in a cycle of unemployment.

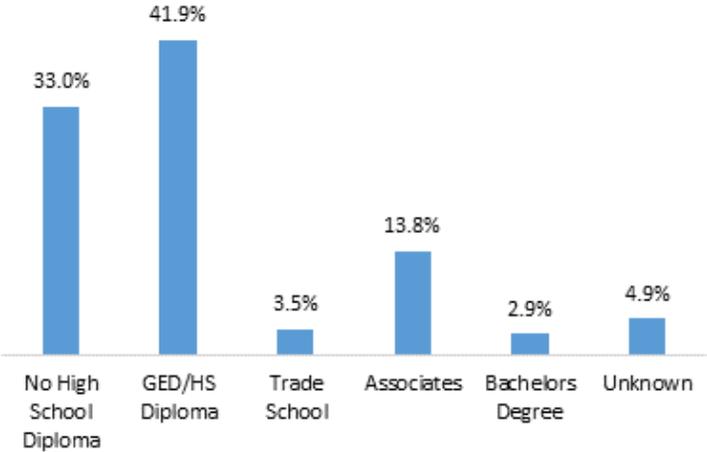
Our Participants

Our participants represent the spectrum of those who live in the communities we serve. Most are African or African-American, without a post-secondary education, and are split 55% and 45% between men and women. Just under half (45%) of our participants are young people in the 18-29 age group, and about two-thirds (67%) of our participants do not have children in their household.

Race and Gender



Highest Level of Education



Our Partners

The Unity Opportunity Collaborative is working with numerous community partners to reduce racial and economic disparities in our community. Below is a list of the partners who have supported this effort.

UOC Members

Emerge Community Development
Minneapolis Public Schools
Minneapolis Urban League
Sabathani Community Center
Stairstep Foundation - His Works United

Employer Partners

Accessibility
Carlson Building Maintenance
Clean Construction
Cookie Cart
Cornerstone Construction
Cub Foods
Dungarvin
G4S Secure Solutions
Holiday
Minneapolis Park Board
Monarch Bus

Education & Training Partners

Allied Medical Training
American Nursing & Technical Institute
Century College
Community Learning Project
Dunwoody College of Technology
Eastside Neighborhood Services
Heavy Metal Truck Training
Interstate Truck Driving School
Isiris Organization
Lighthouse Training Center
Minneapolis Community Technical College
Minnesota Computers for Schools
National American University
National Restaurant Association
North American Medical Academy
North Hennepin Technical College
Summit Academy OIC

The Faith Community

Faith Tabernacle, Minneapolis
Family Life Center, Minneapolis

Fellowship Baptist, Minneapolis
Greater Friendship Baptist, Minneapolis
He is Risen, Minneapolis
Kwanzaa Church, Minneapolis
Macedonia Baptist, Minneapolis
Mt. Olivet Baptist, St. Paul
New Hope Baptist, St. Paul
New Salem Baptist, Minneapolis
Pilgrim Baptist, St. Paul
Pilgrim Rest Baptist, Minneapolis
Progressive Baptist, St. Paul
Resurrection Temple, St. Paul
St. James AME, Minneapolis
Shiloh Temple Int'l Ministries, Minneapolis
The Movement Church, Minneapolis
The Purpose Church, Minneapolis
True Foundation COGIC, Minneapolis
Wayman AME, Minneapolis
Zion Baptist Church

Nonprofit Partners

East Phillips Community Board
KMOJ Radio
The HER Center
Northpoint

Recruitment & Outreach Partners

American Indian OIC
Cultural Wellness Center
Elizabeth Hall International Elementary
Families Moving Forward
Goodwill-Easter Seals
Hawthorne Neighborhood Council
Minneapolis Central Library
Neighborhood Hub
North Regional Library
Patrick Henry High School
People Serving People, Inc.
Saint Anne's Place
Sojourner Project
Washburn High School



**UNITY OPPORTUNITY
COLLABORATIVE**

Partnering to provide education and workforce development.

A partnership between Emerge Community Development, the Minneapolis Urban League, Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis Adult Education, and Stairstep Foundation.

For more information, call 612-529-9267 or visit emerge-mn.org.