### STRATEGY

**Reimagine cities’ role as potential workforce intermediaries**

#### Functions/Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Tasks/ Roles</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Variation Among Places</th>
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<td>Map out employment needs and shifts related to the pandemic, key industries, and employment opportunities. Identify hardest-hit workers and industries, including BIPOC and immigrant workers, service workers, and farmworkers, and understand their talents, abilities and skills.</td>
<td>Workforce development boards, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) administrators, community-based organizations including workforce development organizations, local higher education institutions</td>
<td>In smaller communities, educational institutions, including school boards and local community colleges, can be key partners in connecting residents with job opportunities. In large cities, some municipalities are consolidating formerly separate agencies such as workforce development and economic development to unify services and facilitate coordination. Along with promoting strong collaborations between city agencies and local organizations that focus on both workforce and small business development, practitioners recommended community-led design that directly engages the deep expertise of BIPOC community members and leaders in order to ensure workforce development and capacity-building programs will actually meet workers’ needs and set them up for long-term success. The City of Duluth, for example, recently issued a Request for Proposals (RFPs) for community liaisons to assist its Workforce Development Department with outreach and recruitment of women and BIPOC residents for the construction industry. The RFP allows individuals to apply as vendors, rather than only established businesses, in an effort to reduce bureaucratic and financial barriers typically associated with municipal contracts.</td>
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**Being intentional:** Workforce development initiatives have to balance meeting current worker and employer needs while also trying to prepare workers for future opportunities that arise with economic shifts. Practitioners recommended starting by mapping out existing employment opportunities, key industries, and how needs have changed through the pandemic and will continue to change with long-term economic restructuring. In defining target beneficiaries, stakeholders should also account for a wide range of abilities. Practitioners noted that many corps programs involve manual labor and other physically demanding work, which can exclude older workers and workers with disabilities.

**Identifying and engaging planning and implementation partners:** Practitioners emphasized the multiple points of intervention and need for stronger collaboration among the many stakeholders involved in workforce development. Whether local government plans to act as a direct temporary employer or as a workforce intermediary, engaging workforce boards, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, employers, community-based partners, and workers throughout strategy development and implementation is key.

1. Identify stakeholders and multiple points of intervention for workforce development, including directly engaging BIPOC workers and entrepreneurs.
2. Proactively plan for and resource collaboration on program delivery and outreach.
3. Especially identify stakeholders from the BIPOC communities who have successfully progressed to leadership positions in government, nonprofits, and businesses.

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Community-based organizations; small businesses, entrepreneurs, and impacted workers; city economic development and small business agencies; workforce development boards; educational institutions; chambers of commerce; employers

In smaller communities, educational institutions, including school boards and local community colleges, can be key partners in connecting residents with job opportunities. In Fremont, Ohio, the city partnered with Terra State Community College and Fremont City Schools, the local school board, to hire a director of equity and inclusion. The partners saw the need for more intentional outreach and connection to the growing diverse population in the city and agreed to share the cost of funding the newly created position, which works across these institutions to build bridges between historically disadvantaged communities and economic opportunities, including direct targeted outreach to connect residents to local jobs, many within local small businesses.

In medium to large cities, some municipalities are consolidating formerly separate agencies such as workforce development and economic development to unify services and facilitate coordination. For example, the City of Atlanta’s economic development agency, Invest Atlanta, merged with the local workforce development agency to combine resources, collaborate on outreach to potential employers and workers, and explore opportunities for city financing for technical assistance and training.

Along with promoting strong collaborations between city agencies and local organizations that focus on both workforce and small business development, practitioners recommended community-led design that directly engages the deep expertise of BIPOC community members and leaders in order to ensure workforce development and capacity-building programs will actually meet workers’ needs and set them up for long-term success. The City of Duluth, for example, recently issued a Request for Proposals (RFPs) for community liaisons to assist its Workforce Development Department with outreach and recruitment of women and BIPOC residents for the construction industry. The RFP allows individuals to apply as vendors, rather than only established businesses, in an effort to reduce bureaucratic and financial barriers typically associated with municipal contracts.
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| Identifying and addressing barriers to access | 1. Survey financial support, wraparound services, educational support, and scheduling needs for program participants.  
2. Secure resources to provide needed support.  
3. Identify and train program staff to ensure program safety and accessibility for participants.  
4. Provide part-time work opportunities, and opportunities for (earn & learn) work-based learning for participants. | Program participants; community-based organizations, including business development and workforce organizations; educational institutions; employers | The Edna Martin Christian Center in Indianapolis provides participants in workforce development, education, and entrepreneurial training with stipends to help pay bills or other expenses. |
| Identifying and addressing capacity needs for deployment | 1. Develop specialized workforce and small business assistance tailored to specific sector needs, which can be more impactful than one-stop shops.  
2. Facilitate meaningful referrals across organizations and ensure program participants receive the support they need to overcome barriers, from transportation challenges to mental and emotional traumas and discrimination, among others.  
3. Secure resources for staff to facilitate coordination and collaboration across programs. | City small business and economic development agencies, community-based organizations including business development and workforce organizations; technical assistance providers, educational institutions, funders, employers | The City of Boston’s Small Business Technical Assistance Program uses a combination of tailored assessments and a flexible Request for Proposals (RFP) process to provide customized technical assistance to entrepreneurs. City small business staff meet individually with each prospective small business participant to assess their needs and pair them with a technical assistance provider. If there is no technical assistance provider with relevant experience, the monthly rolling RFP process allows the city to identify providers to meet specific needs. After matching the participant with a provider, city staff completes a follow-up assessment to make sure the small business owner feels equipped to use the tools they gained through working with the provider. In Chicago, major funders pooled resources to launch the Chicago Fund for Equitable Business Growth, which supports partnerships among nonprofit small business service providers and funds a project manager to staff the collaborative. Similarly, the Cleveland Business Growth Collaborative has a consultant who facilitates the collaborative’s work and holds members accountable to shared goals. Collaborative members also share data via Salesforce, which allows them to track one another’s performance metrics and better serve participants. |
| Setting up a monitoring process with accountability mechanisms | Develop metrics that go beyond number of jobs created (which can put entrepreneurship and small business creation at a disadvantage relative to connecting with larger employers) and ensure timelines for meeting outcomes align with realities that BIPOC workers and entrepreneurs face. | Community-based organizations including business development and workforce organizations, BIPOC entrepreneurs and small businesses, city agencies, workforce development boards, employers | |