

Young Adult Outreach

Workforce Development Programs that Engage Young Adults

Young people often find themselves either wanting or needing to work, but don't know where to begin. Reaching out to them using tools they are familiar with can increase the likelihood of making a true connection and can lead to the start of a lifelong successful career journey. Even before the global health pandemic, the world faced an unemployment pandemic among people between the ages of 16 and 24, which created nearly 90,000 Opportunity Youth in Cook County— young people both out of school and out of work. In response to this dire need, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act specifically mandated that at least 75% of all youth funding be directed to services for Opportunity Youth. The Partnership, in alignment with local needs, directs 85% of its federal youth funds to this population, with the balance serving high school students. Over the past program year, we continued to focus on youth programming, utilizing trauma-informed tools that recognize and respond to signs, symptoms, and risks of trauma to better support the needs of youth who have experienced trauma related to COVID-19.

The Partnership will invest more than \$16.5 million in federal WIOA funding from now to June 2024 to serve youth ages 16-24 in Chicago and suburban Cook County. 42 community-based organizations in our network offer young adults experiences and skills to connect them with fulfilling career opportunities with family-sustaining wages.

\$2 million to serve youth in school

\$11.7 million to serve youth out-of-school

\$2.8 million in Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to give youth access to training in high-demand, high-growth industries

Chicago Cook County Young Adult Workforce Development Portal

In 2020, The Partnership collaborated with career exploration nonprofit Roadtrip Nation to launch the Chicago Cook County Young Adult Workforce Development Portal, an online resource that helps job seekers explore promising career and training opportunities in our area. Since then, we've continually worked to improve the site by introducing new video content and features that can better serve Cook County's young adults in their search for fulfilling careers.

Over the past program year, The Partnership sent young people from the Chicago and Cook County area on a mini-road trip to interview local professionals working in Manufacturing, Healthcare, Food Service, Information Technology, and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics—all industries of growing opportunity, as highlighted by the Chicago Recovery Task Force's 2020 Advisory Report.

From these candid conversations, Roadtrip Nation produced a suite of new video content to be featured on the Chicago Cook Young Adult Workforce Development Portal, including five new industry features that will help more young people across Cook County discover possibilities within these growing fields. These videos highlight a variety of local businesses—from powerhouse Northern Trust to community favorite Peach's Restaurant—as well as giving job seekers an exclusive look into a day in the life of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.



In summer 2021, the Roadtrip Nation van pulled up in Chicago to interview local leaders. Those featured were:

- **President Toni Preckwinkle** - President, Cook County Board of Commissioners
- **Jasmine Thornton** - Respiratory Therapist, Comer Children's Hospital - Healthcare
- **Rukiya Curvey-Johnson** - Executive Director of Rush Education & Career Hub, Rush University Medical Center - Healthcare
- **Trillis Rollins** - Executive Chef, Peaches Restaurant - Hospitality, Tourism, & Food Service
- **Stephanie Dremonas** - Executive Officer, Pete's Fresh Market - Hospitality, Tourism, & Food Service
- **Kymbria Brown** - L6 Operations Manager, Amazon - Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics
- **Jeannie Alexander** - Vice President of Rail Station Management, Chicago Transit Authority - Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics
- **Juatise Gathings** - Regional Operations Director, Discover Financial Services - IT / Technology
- **Tanya Griggs** - Vice President & Product Manager, Northern Trust - IT / Technology
- **David Robinson** - Director of External Affairs, Manufacturing Renaissance - Manufacturing

In addition, Cook County funded a \$250 stipend for each young adult who completed the Roadtrip Nation online curriculum over a two-month period. The stipend was funded with federal The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020) and the Coronavirus Response and Consolidated Appropriations Act (2021) dollars.



Opportunity Works

Working with the Office of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and private funders, The Partnership created Opportunity Works. Opportunity Works is a paid internship program for Opportunity Youth (young adults who are not in school and not connected to employment) in suburban Cook County, connecting them with businesses in high-growth, high-demand sectors, and exposing the interns to careers they may not have considered in Manufacturing; Information Technology; Healthcare; and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. The program graduated its 1,000th intern in 2020 and has now served more than 1,300 young adults. The program funds the interns' wages, allowing employers to provide paid internships at no-cost, while connecting interns to career-pathway opportunities.

- Opportunity Works is an 8-week, year-round paid internship program in high-demand, high-growth industries for out-of-work or out-of-school suburban Cook County young adults. Cook County's investment of American Rescue Plan funds allowed the Opportunity Works program to double the young adults it assisted, growing from 200 to 400 young adults served. The program pays the intern wages of \$15 an hour, 25 hours a week. The program is available to all suburban Cook County young adults.
- Opportunity Summer is a 7-week paid summer internship program that provides a foundation for future full-time employment. This new summer program serves 200 interns and is funded by Cook County's investment of American Rescue Plan funds. The program launched in summer of 2022 and pays the intern wages of \$15 an hour, 25 hours a week. The program is available to all suburban Cook County young adults.

