RESEARCH REPORT

Advancing Racial Equity in Delaware's Workforce Development System

Current Program Practices, Strategies, and Recommendations

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May 2023

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

Workforce development systems are designed to prepare people for employment, but structural racism and inequities in access, opportunities, and outcomes in the labor market and across society limit the success of programs in achieving those goals. Urban Institute researchers conducted a multifaceted landscape scan of workforce development programs in Delaware to gain a comprehensive understanding of the degree to which the state's workforce system prioritizes racial equity and addresses structural racism. To complete this landscape scan, the researchers collected and assessed publicly accessible information and documentation on workforce development programs in Delaware, conducted interviews with 23 stakeholders in key Delaware education and training programs and state workforce agencies to document the pathways and activities implemented by those programs, and fielded a brief survey to gather more information on racial equity policies and practices in operation throughout the state's workforce development system.

State workforce development ecosystems are complex, multilayered, and constrained and shaped by top-down forces such as federal funding streams and a national history of structural racism. This research effort sought to amplify the voices of workforce development practitioners who work directly with individuals in need of training and of businesses in need of skilled workers.

This report reflects how racial equity is currently being addressed in the Delaware workforce system and shares insights on how to better infuse racial equity considerations into workforce development policies, programs, and practices. It begins with an overview of the activities and experiences of Delaware's workforce development programs, with a particular focus on organizations that provide or support education and training for occupational skills in the state. The primary findings from this overview include the following:

- The organizations that we interviewed serve a diverse group of Delaware residents, including underserved individuals and communities, underemployed and/or unemployed individuals who may not live in underserved communities, participants of color, individuals from marginalized groups, middle school–age individuals, high school–age individuals, postsecondary learners, young adults between the ages of 14 and 26 regardless of educational enrollment status, and seniors ages 55 and older.

- Interview respondents mentioned numerous benefits that motivate individuals to enroll in their programs, including the potential to increase long-term earnings; availability of supportive services; willingness of programs to accept participants at their current skill level; alignment of programs with in-demand industries or jobs and their relationships with employers;

opportunity to gain skills required for more rewarding careers; opportunity to receive stackable credentials and on-ramps to a career path; provision of no-cost training to participants; and the inclusion of access to "nontraditional" career fields (i.e., women in tech) and earn-and-learn opportunities.

- Five training providers shared that they have dedicated business engagement staff who are tasked with building relationships with employers, understanding the nuances of their talent needs, and ensuring that their participants are well situated for employment.

- Three organizations we interviewed reported that they train participants for entry-level positions and not necessarily for roles beyond those initial rungs of the career ladder. The postsecondary institutions we interviewed had the most formal structures for helping students advance along a career pathway. Five of the training organizations we interviewed described how they integrate career pathway preparation into their program structure.

- The information technology and health care fields have been a primary focus of Delaware workforce development programs because of the high demand for workers in those industries and occupations, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

- It is common practice for programs that offer occupational skills training to assist participants in obtaining employment in a job relevant to their training. Work-based learning is a component offered by some programs; however, it is not as common as providing job placement services to participants.

- There are a variety of ways in which program staff consider feedback from employers, including through employer advisory groups and industry councils; surveys; instructors with relevant industry experience; existing industry associations and local chambers of commerce; conversations with employers of program participants; informal discussions with local employers; and labor market information produced and disseminated by public agencies.

- Virtually all training organizations reported that they consider job quality when placing a participant in a job, although the standards for a quality job and the effort invested in ensuring participants bridge to quality jobs varies widely.

- Nearly all of the training providers interviewed conduct surveys of their participants, either during or at the end of the program. However, none of the organizations we interviewed articulated a way that participants or workers are able to weigh in on initial program design.

- Most of the organizations we spoke to have a staff role focused on supporting participants throughout and sometimes after the end of their program participation. These participant

support staff provide a variety of services, ranging from mentorship, participant goal setting, and job placement to connecting participants to wraparound services provided by other organizations or government entities. For youth who are in school, staff might also make sure they are attending their classes, connected to tutoring services, or have a space to complete homework after school.

- Interviewees identified many common barriers to success, including unreliable transportation access (especially for youth); insufficient educational attainment and low quality of prior education; financial need, which was also associated with a reluctance to share financial information; racism and racial biases, including the perception that participants do not belong in certain spaces; affordable, accessible child care; and affordable and safe housing.

The next section of the report describes how Delaware workforce development programs advance racial equity through internal and external practices, including program operations and staffing, data collection and analysis, and advocacy. This discussion highlights current activities and successes, as well as challenges and gaps in programming to advance racial equity. Key findings include the following:

- Most interviewees agreed with the definition of *equity* used by the research team: "the state in which one's identity has no bearing on their outcomes." Some interviewees said they would add other criteria, such as looking to histories of injustices participants have experienced, helping participants understand structural issues that have produced or impacted the conditions they face, and ensuring that participant outcomes include a "wealth-generating" wage.

- Most organizations collect demographic information about participants, including race and ethnicity. How that information is used by the organization varies.

- Of the participants who are tracking outcomes by race and ethnicity, just one said they did not find any statistical disparities. The rest, however, noted differences in outcomes for participants of color.

- All survey respondents indicated they used at least one type of strategy to advance racial equity within their own staffing and operational practices. The most common activity to ensure organizational racial equity was identifying the importance of racial equity in overall mission or strategy.

- Over half of survey respondents indicated that their organizations are involved in "advocating for local, state, or federal policies to improve job quality, benefits, or other issues."

- Some respondents noted that communicating about racial equity was a challenge, including finding ways to "speak about it honestly and openly" and finding channels for discussion.

- The interviewees shared the following deficits in the workforce system: lack of diversity in Delaware's workforce systems; challenges with Delaware's workforce data ecosystem; needs for improvements to goal setting and tracking progress related to participant outcomes and equity; and weaknesses in partnerships in Delaware, including between community organizations and employers and among workforce organizations.

- Interviewees shared several suggestions on how the state of Delaware can better address racial equity in the workforce system: (1) developing a strategy and goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; being vocal and intentional; and measuring progress; (2) improving data collection and infrastructure and leveraging it to more precisely measure outcomes; (3) increasing diversity and inclusion by removing barriers to training and careers and addressing discrimination; (4) making program improvements that center racial equity in recruitment and program services; (5) ensuring that participants (and workers in general) have access to high-paying jobs; (6) building more partnerships to ensure collaboration between workforce development providers and intermediaries; and (7) ensuring that funding for workforce programs is distributed equitably.

- Training providers and the workforce system overall can leverage other resources to support workforce development beyond Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding streams, especially those with a focus on racial equity. These resources include opportunities from the US Economic Development Administration; opportunities to partner directly with businesses to receive funding for the talent development services they provide; and funding from the Delaware Blue Collar Jobs Development Act.

There is more that could be done to enhance participant outcomes and reduce racial disparities, including leveraging data, engaging in advocacy with policymakers and employers, and setting goals and tracking progress.

- **Advocacy with policymakers.** Most of the interviewees we spoke to did not engage in advocacy specifically regarding racial equity. In one instance, an interviewee noted concerns about nonprofit status and tax rules. While some nonprofits' tax status may restrict them from direct advocacy of a political candidate or a piece of legislation, many can still engage in advocacy on a broad policy issue, on behalf of a particular community, or for social change. Organizations like the National Skills Coalition and Prosperity Now suggest that workforce providers and

intermediaries call for policies that can address structural barriers that participants face, such as preventing discrimination in hiring, offering financial aid for education and training, and removing work requirements from public assistance policies.[1] Funders can participate in advocacy as well. The Families and Workers Fund is organized by three foundations that financially supported organizations and advocated for changes to the unemployment insurance system during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leung 2021).

- **Advocacy with employers.** Less than half the survey respondents said they cultivate relationships with employers who actively commit to racial equity in their hiring or that commit to providing high-quality jobs. Workforce providers can continue to target employers that offer "high road," good-quality employment with livable wages and benefits. Workforce providers also can engage employers on developing equity goals, learning about structural racism, and engaging in advocacy to remove structural barriers (Langston, Scoggins, and Walsh 2020).

- **Setting goals and tracking progress.** If Delaware is to address racial equity in the workforce system, stakeholders will need to identify goals and ensure that progress is measured. As the National Skills Coalition describes, "Racial equity goals in postsecondary attainment and local workforce development plans help focus collective efforts on achieving racial equity instead of perpetuating disparities" (Johnson et al. 2019). Individual programs can set goals for their programs and an appropriate entity could coordinate across the system to set goals for the workforce system overall. These objectives could incorporate community input, as interviewees recommended, to ensure that targets and activities reflect the needs of residents.

- **Models for advancement.** The report includes three examples that exemplify the above principles and seek to advance racial equity in workforce development programs and systems. The examples reflect ways that workforce development stakeholders can: think systemically about addressing racial equity (Chicago Jobs Council); operationalize the concepts of inclusion and equity in workforce training programs (Humanim); and hold themselves accountable through data tracking and transparency (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Department).

Workforce Development in Delaware

The United Way of Delaware (UWDE) and the Delaware Racial Justice Collaborative (DRJC) aim to catalyze systemic change in job mobility pipelines and wealth-creation mechanisms to foster an equitable and diverse workforce. This report assesses the current state of workforce development in Delaware through a comprehensive and equity-focused lens. The goal of this project is to provide a detailed overview and map of career and technical education and workforce development opportunities in Delaware; to identify programs and practices that advance racial equity; and to identify barriers to advancing racial equity.

Racial Equity in Workforce Development

Structural racism describes the system of discriminatory policies and institutional practices that created deep inequities across social and economic domains by excluding people of color from the main pathways of opportunity and upward mobility (Kijakazi et al. 2019). The United States was founded on the kidnapping, enslavement, and forced labor of Black people. After emancipation, Black people were often restricted to sharecropping and other low paying and strenuous jobs (Kijakazi et al. 2019). Employment discrimination was legal and common throughout most of the century. In the workforce system, the Civil Rights Era Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was "focused specifically on putting white Americans back to work" and "codified exclusion, limited the ability of people of color to benefit from the federal workforce system, and limited opportunities for labor force participation, economic growth, or self-sufficiency" (Davis, Goughnour, and Singh 2020). Structural racism in employment continues today and education and training is not a panacea to achieving equity because these programs do not connect Black workers to good jobs in the way that they do for white workers (Royster 2003). Additionally, discrimination by employers continues to be a barrier. Black workers continue to be overrepresented in low-paying occupations, even when they have the required educational qualifications for high-paying jobs (Hamilton, Austin, and Darity 2011; Biu, Famighetti, and Hamilton 2021), and they receive lower wages for the same type of work (Hamilton et al. 2021). In registered apprenticeship programs, Black workers were historically denied apprenticeship positions (Marshall and Briggs 1967). Even though Black workers and other apprentices of color are much better represented in the registered apprenticeship system as a whole today (Kuehn 2017), they continue to

be concentrated in lower-paying occupations (Camardelle 2023; Katz et al. 2022;). Additionally, researchers have documented that Black apprentices still contend with "racial exclusion and harassment" (Camardelle 2023).

Participants and stakeholders in the workforce development system are increasingly recognizing and focusing on these inequities. Racial equity can be defined in different ways but, in this report, we define *racial equity* as the state in which one's identity has no bearing on their outcomes. In workforce development, equity means that a person's identity doesn't determine their access to livable, steady wages, access to benefits, or opportunities for career advancement (box 1). This definition of racial equity acknowledges that the workforce development system is broader than what happens inside individual training and education programs. Equity is also determined by the systems through which individuals access those training programs, as well as their experiences on the job after they complete a training program. A workforce development program with equitable internal practices that is not accessible to all Delawareans or does not put participants on an equitable career pathway after completion will only reproduce structural racial inequality.

Skill development through education and training can help people access good jobs, but it is not a guarantee of a good job or an equitable employment outcome. People of color, and particularly women of color, face structural barriers that result in lower earnings, fewer benefits, and overrepresentation in roles with lower pay and fewer supervisory responsibilities compared with their white counterparts with comparable educational attainment (Schieder and Gould 2016). Equity in workforce development therefore requires strategies for ensuring equitable outcomes in the labor market after program completion, not just equitable practices within a training program.

There are several ways that racial equity can be achieved in the workforce system. Workforce providers and intermediaries can ensure that they **recruit, retain, and serve diverse participants**. To ensure equitable recruitment, programs can do outreach in diverse areas with partners that serve communities of color and provide wraparound services, such as transportation support and child care,

so that barriers to participating in training and employment are lessened. Racial equity in program retention can be supported when programs ensure that curriculums are relevant and accessible in terms of language, technology, and skill levels and when they ensure that participants are directed to career pathways based on interests and opportunities for growth and prosperity, not based on stereotypes about the types of jobs that are most appropriate for various racial, ethnic, and gender groups. In some cases, injustices are perpetuated within the programs and organizations that make up the workforce development system, so organizations must **collect and analyze data to evaluate outcomes** so they can understand who is being served and whether there are differences in outcomes by race and ethnicity. Organizations can also **ensure that staff and leadership reflect the people served**. In other cases, injustices are systemic and broader than individual programs. This requires **broader systems change and advocacy to advance racial equity**. Workforce development programs can play a part in this advocacy for racial equity insofar as they are critical actors in their communities and important constituents of policymakers.

Workforce actors can also **advocate for supportive policies** (Davis, Goughnour, and Singh 2020), such as vigorous enforcement of antidiscrimination laws in hiring and promotions, higher minimum wages, and other policies and funding that can support trainees and workers inside and outside of employment, such as child care, affordable housing, and wealth-building mechanisms. Workforce providers can also **advocate for equitable hiring practices with employers** to encourage them to hire participants of color, remove artificial job requirements, and offer supportive wages and benefits (Langston, Scoggins, and Walsh 2020).

Research Process

Due to the breadth of workforce development systems and the lack of standard measurement and tracking of practices to advance racial equity, the research team used a multipronged approach to understand the state of racial equity in Delaware's workforce development system:

- A **workforce development program matrix** was developed using online research to document the activities of 147 workforce development programs in the state. The matrix captured information on the geographic scope of programs, their target populations, and their activities to advance racial equity. In some cases, multiple programs in the matrix are operated by the same organization. The matrix was also updated with information from interviews and surveys.

- An **online survey of workforce development programs** supplemented the program matrix. The survey collected information on practices to advance racial equity that are typically difficult to

ascertain from program webpages and public documentation. Only a subset of programs in the matrix responded to the online survey and these survey responses were integrated into the matrix when available.

- **In-depth, semistructured interviews** with 23 workforce development program representatives provided more detailed information on some of the programs in the matrix. Interviewees provided detailed descriptions of their program activities, successes and challenges, and practices to advance racial equity in their program, their participants' communities, and across Delaware.

Additional details on this multipronged research process are provided in the appendix. This report integrates findings from each data collection strategy, drawing especially on the in-depth, semistructured interviews.

Delaware Demographics

Delaware is a small state, composed of three counties. The northernmost county, New Castle, is the most populous and is predominantly urban, including Wilmington, the largest city in the state. Kent County is south of New Castle and home to the state capital, Dover. Sussex County is the southernmost in the state, predominantly rural, and home to coastal destinations such as Rehoboth Beach. Each county has distinctive demographics and economic opportunities (table 1) that shape the ways workforce development programs approach their task of advancing racial equity in different parts of the state.

TABLE 1
Delaware Demographics by County

	Delaware, Total	New Castle County	Kent County	Sussex County
Race				
American Indian and Alaskan Native	0.7%	0.5%	0.8%	1.1%
Asian	4.2%	6.0%	2.4%	1.4%
Black or African American	23.6%	27.2%	28.4%	11.8%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Two or more races	2.9%	2.8%	4.1%	2.3%
White	68.4%	63.4%	64.3%	83.2%
Hispanic or Latino	10.1%	11.0%	7.8%	9.6%
Median household income (2020 dollars)	$69,110	$75,275	$60,117	$64,905
Persons in poverty (%)	11.6%	10.1%	13.0%	11.0%
Persons in poverty (number)	116,393	57,743	23,939	21,686
Population estimate, 2020	1,003,384	571,708	184,149	197,145

Source: "QuickFacts: Delaware," US Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/DE#qf-headnote-a. "QuickFacts estimates are derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, Current Population Survey, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits."

County divisions are important for structuring how program staff think of the state's workforce development system. An interviewee from Delaware State University, a historically Black college or university (HBCU) in Dover, described how "we have three counties and all of them are like three different countries, three different states." He suggested that these divisions made it difficult for policymakers to have a single vision for racial equity in workforce development for the whole state. An interviewee from NERDiT, an information technology (IT) apprenticeship program based in New Castle County, described New Castle as "the urban part of Delaware" and noted that "all the resources are here." He remarked that "there's a huge Hispanic population" in Sussex County, but that it's "just not being paid attention to" in the workforce system. Some of the interviewed programs, such as First State Community Action Agency and Pathways to Success, have always operated in Sussex County, while others, such as Network Connect, have moved into the region more recently. There was general agreement by interviewees that Kent and Sussex Counties are underserved and could have better workforce development infrastructure, but that there is a clear numerical imperative to invest in workers in New Castle County.

In general, these perceptions of the differences between Delaware's counties align with census data (table 1). New Castle County is the most populous, with the highest share of nonwhite residents (36.6 percent) and the highest share of Hispanic or Latino residents (11.0 percent).[2] In contrast, 83.2 percent of Sussex County residents are white. Median household income is higher in New Castle County, and poverty rates are lower, although because of its larger population, the number of people living in poverty is higher than the number in Kent and Sussex Counties combined.

Delawareans' circumstances vary widely within counties, so UWDE has designated certain areas as Promise Communities in order to focus workforce development and social service efforts in the state (figure 1). Promise Communities are zip codes with particularly high family poverty rates and other barriers to upward mobility.[3] Workforce development programs in the state embrace the list of Promise Communities as a way of organizing their activities, and for this reason, the designation is an important lever for change in the workforce development system. An interviewee from Network Connect suggested that "in Delaware, zip codes are a big thing," because they help programs target pockets of poverty and communities that are otherwise neglected. When asked to identify the communities they serve, many interviewees responded by listing zip codes representing Promise Communities.

However, communities are dynamic, and one respondent noted that they weren't "sure those [Promise Communities] are still the most accurate representation of the high-need communities," suggesting that it might be valuable for UWDE to update the Promise Communities list.

FIGURE 1
Delaware Promise Communities, 2022
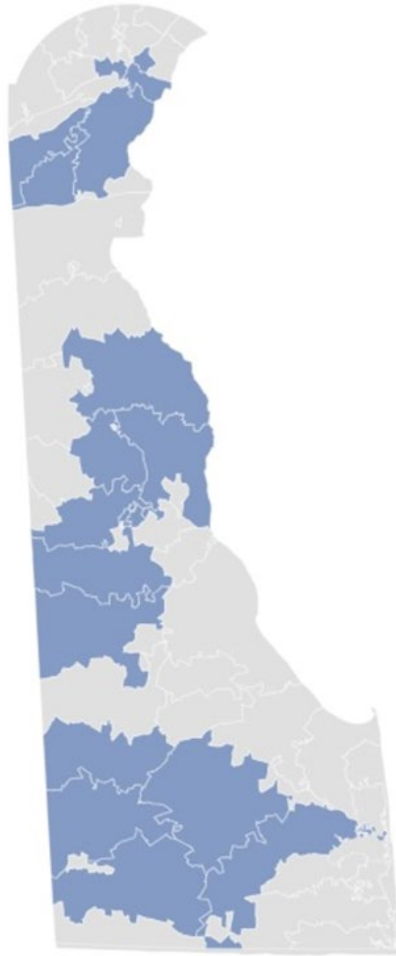
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Source: Authors' map of the zip codes identified as Promise Communities by the United Way of Delaware. "Delaware's Promise Communities," United Way of Delaware, accessed November 1, 2022, https://uwde.org/what-we-do/our-communities/delaware-promise-communities/. Promise Community zip codes include Wilmington Eastside (19801 and 19802); Wilmington Westside (19805); Southbridge and Route 9 Corridor (19720), SW of Bear and Central New Castle (19701 and 19702); Dover North Ring (19901, 19904, and 19977); South of Dover, Felton (19934, 19943, and 19952); Seaford, Bridgeville, and Laurel (19933, 19956, and 19973); and Georgetown (19947, 19966).

Promise Community designations provide many workforce development programs with a useful way to focus their services, but they are less relevant for organizations that either have a statewide mandate or that are less constrained by resources to work within specific neighborhoods. Public agencies such as the Delaware Department of Education or the state Workforce Development Board, for example, report an interest in supporting communities with high needs, but they are also obligated to work throughout the state, irrespective of zip code. Other organizations, such as the hands-on coding

education program, Code Differently, operate throughout the state but offer enhanced services in higher-need areas. Code Differently's high school program is in Wilmington, but its other programs operate throughout the state. A statewide scope of action for public agencies and organizations like Code Differently is critical for equitable access to jobs for residents of Promise Communities. Quality jobs may exist outside of the neighborhoods where Promise Community residents live, go to school, and attend training, so accessing employment opportunities in neighboring zip codes can be a strategy for improving outcomes in Promise Communities.

Some Delaware workforce development programs mentioned that they occasionally work with participants outside of the state, including Network Connect, NERDiT, and Tech Impact. The Delaware State Chamber of Commerce shared that its mission is to build a skilled workforce for Delaware employers, and that half of the participants in its program Intern Delaware are from out of state. "While the employer is selling you on the company," the chamber respondent explained, "we're selling you on Delaware" with the goal of encouraging participants to move to the state.

A final factor in determining the geographic focus of workforce development programs is grant funding. An interviewee with First State Community Action Agency described how different grants were written to focus on particular areas of the state, depending on the interests of the funder or partnerships. A grant-dependent workforce development system is constrained by the details of grant funding and the programs' own proposal, and this can shape and limit how services are focused.

Delaware Workforce Development Programs

The workforce development program matrix and in-depth, semistructured interviews in this study provide a snapshot of selected programs within a large and diverse statewide workforce development system. This section provides a brief overview of the types of programs included in the matrix and in the interviews.

For both the matrix and the interviews, the research team focused on prominent programs and programs that were identified as important to the state by workforce system stakeholders. For this reason, the sample of programs should be understood as a purposive sample and a "snowball" sample of Delaware programs rather than a statistically representative sample. The matrix is now maintained by UWDE and may be updated with new organizations and information.

Matrix of Workforce Development Programs

The research team generated a matrix of 147 workforce development programs and collected information on their geographic locations, target populations, services, and strategies to advance racial equity. This group of programs includes public agencies and educational institutions as well as nonprofit organizations.

Classifying workforce development programs can be difficult because the programs can provide a variety of services to different populations. The research team assigned each of the programs in the matrix to a broad category to describe their program type (table 2), with the understanding that some programs could be classified in multiple ways or fit in different categories. For example, *adult-focused workforce development* programs primarily target individuals older than 18 in the community, although some admit youth in some cases. Similarly, an education and training program classified as a *postsecondary or certification program* was identified this way because the organization operating the program is a postsecondary institution. Other workforce development programs may partner with or provide some form of postsecondary education, but they were only categorized as a postsecondary or certification program if that is their primary institutional identity.

The most common programs are *youth career and technical education* programs, with 40 programs in the matrix. These programs include Delaware Pathways programs and similar in-school or out-of-school technical education programs for youth that are predominantly delivered in a classroom setting. *Youth-focused workforce development* programs (16 programs in the matrix) also serve youth in Delaware but are more closely tied to specific employers and job readiness. Both youth career technical education and youth-focused workforce development programs sometimes include youth mentoring in their services, but we identified three programs that are specifically targeted to *youth mentoring and development*.

Two other common program types are *adult-focused workforce development* (36) and *postsecondary or certification programs* (38). Seven of the programs in the matrix rely heavily on work-based learning, including internships, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship training. Two are *older worker employment programs*, and five are focused on *personal enrichment* that is less directly tied to occupational training.

TABLE 2
Program Types in the Workforce Development Program Matrix

	Programs by Type	
	Number	**Percentage**
Youth career and technical education	40	27.2%
Youth mentoring and development	3	2.0%
Youth-focused workforce development	16	10.9%
Work-based learning or apprenticeship	7	4.8%
Adult-focused workforce development	36	24.4%
Older worker employment program	2	1.4%
Postsecondary or certification program	38	25.9%
Personal enrichment	5	3.4%
Total	147	100.0%

Source: Authors' review of Delaware workforce development programs websites and documentation, supplemented by information provided in interviews by programs that were interviewed. The table reflects program types for programs in the matrix as of February 6, 2023.
Notes: This matrix includes a subset of programs in Delaware. Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

The workforce development programs included in the matrix provide services to many different target populations, and some programs identified more than one target population. While most programs serve a clearly identifiable population of clients, target populations for some programs in the matrix could not be clearly identified or could only be identified as a broader group (e.g., serving youth but with no particular age group identified). Over half of the programs in the matrix (93) serve postsecondary students, either because the programs are college-based or because they are community-based programs supporting students. Almost a third of the programs serve high school students (45), and another 44 serve young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 (who may or may not be enrolled in a postsecondary program). Relatively few of the programs we identified serve middle school students (8) or elementary school students (1).

TABLE 3
Populations Served by Programs in the Workforce Development Program Matrix

	Programs by Population Served	
	Number	**Percentage**
Elementary school students	1	0.6%
Middle school students	8	5.4%
High school students	45	30.6%
Youth (no age group identified by program)	30	20.4%
Opportunity youth	6	4.1%
Postsecondary students	93	63.3%
Workers	12	8.2%
Adults ages 18 to 24	44	29.9%
Adults ages 25 to 54	29	19.7%
Adults ages 55 and older	19	12.9%
Total	147	100.0%

Source: Authors' review of Delaware workforce development programs' websites and documentation, supplemented by information provided in interviews by the programs interviewed. The table reflects target populations for programs in the matrix as of February 6, 2023.

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because some organizations served multiple populations. The matrix used for this report is not an exhaustive list of workforce programs in Delaware.

The workforce development programs included in the matrix serve many different types of participants and deliver a variety of services, but they are much less geographically varied. Over 87 percent of the programs serve individuals in New Castle County, even though only 57 percent of Delawareans live in that county. In contrast, 15.6 percent of programs operate in Kent County and Sussex County. Fifteen of the programs operate in all three counties, which implies that almost two-thirds of the programs in Kent and Sussex Counties do not even exclusively serve residents there. This relatively low geographic variability of programs in the matrix may be attributable to the research team's sampling approach. New Castle County workforce development programs could be overrepresented if they are more prominent or better known by stakeholders. However, geographic concentration in New Castle County could also reflect actual reduced services in the southern part of the state.

TABLE 4

Geographic Areas Served by Programs in the Workforce Development Program Matrix

	Programs by Area Served	
	Number	**Percentage**
New Castle County	129	87.7%
Kent County	23	15.6%
Sussex County	23	15.6%
Total	147	100.0%

Source: Authors' review of Delaware workforce development programs websites and documentation, supplemented by information provided in interviews by the programs interviewed. The table reflects target populations for programs in the matrix as of February 6, 2023.

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because some organizations served multiple populations. The matrix used for this report is not an exhaustive list of workforce programs in Delaware.

Interviews with Workforce Development Programs

Like the programs in the matrix, the organizations that were interviewed serve a diverse group of residents of Delaware, including the following:

- Underserved Delawareans, including individuals or communities with a high poverty rate, and underresourced or underrepresented communities

- Underemployed or unemployed individuals who may or may not live in underserved communities

- Marginalized groups, including people of color, individuals receiving income support from the government (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, etc.), and justice-involved individuals

- Middle school students or middle school–age individuals from grades 6 through 8

- High school students or high school–age individuals from grades 9 through 12

- Postsecondary students

- Youth and young adults ages 14 to 26 regardless of educational enrollment status

- Seniors ages 55 and older

Interview respondents from Delaware workforce development programs described which of these populations their programs serve. Their responses (table 5) should be interpreted as the program's understanding of its primary mission or service area, rather than an exhaustive accounting of the types of clients they serve. For example, a postsecondary career and technical education program might have

responded that it serves a postsecondary and youth or young adult population, but because it operates in an underserved community, its clients could also be underserved, underemployed, or marginalized.

Populations Served by Workforce Development Programs Interviewed

	Programs by Population Served	
	Number	**Percentage**
Underserved	4	17.4%
Underemployed and/or unemployed	3	13.1%
People of color/marginalized groups	4	17.4%
High school students/high school–age individuals	4	17.4%
Middle school students/middle school–age individuals	2	8.7%
Postsecondary students	6	26.1%
Youth/young adults	9	39.1%
Seniors	1	4.5%
Total	23	100%

Source: Authors' interviews with Delaware workforce development programs.
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because some organizations served multiple populations.

Survey of Delaware Workforce Programs

The research team fielded a short survey to workforce programs and stakeholders in Delaware that asked about their activities to advance racial equity in their own programs and in the workforce. There was a low response rate, but we include survey results to offer a glimpse into strategies for incorporating racial equity in participant recruitment, retention, career pathways, and placement efforts, as well as internal practices related to staffing, training, and advocacy. The target populations and communities the programs said they served can be found in table 6.

TABLE 6
Communities and Populations Served by Survey Participants

	Programs by Community/Population Served	
	Number	**Percentage**
Adult learners: 18yrs + (including seniors)	1	7.7%
K-12 children	1	7.7%
Latino communities	1	7.7%
Low-income communities/underserved communities	5	38.5%
Moderate income communities	1	7.7%
Postsecondary students	2	15.4%
Promise communities	13	100.0%
Youth	2	15.4%
Youth Enrichment: grades 5–12	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.00%

Source: Urban Institute survey.

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because some organizations served multiple populations. Note two programs participating in the survey were from the same organization. Eight out of the 13 programs that filled out the survey also participated in an interview.

Research Findings

This section of the report explores findings from the research and is primarily based on the interviews. Urban researchers asked about how participants gain access to workforce development programs, who is eligible, and who is served; how workforce programs recruit participants and employers; what training practices are utilized, including for which careers, occupations, industries, and certifications training is provided; how programs are designed and how employer and participant input is incorporated; how participants are retained and supported beyond training. Finally, the researchers asked about how workforce development programs address racial equity inside and outside their programs and how they believe the broader workforce system can better ensure equity for Delawareans.

Access to Programs

We define *access* as the means by which participants attain services from a workforce development program. Equitable access to a program is key to ensuring that individuals from historically marginalized groups can benefit from high-quality programs, overcome structural barriers, and achieve equitable outcomes. Access has multiple dimensions, including the eligibility requirements set by the program, the communities served by the program, and any challenges individuals may face in being able to access the services of the program.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility requirements are one of the ways an organization targets potential participants for recruitment to receive program services. These requirements are especially important in programs that focus on young people between the ages of 14 and 18. Two such programs, Pathways to Success and Network Connect, use age and a set of criteria, such as grade level attainment in math or reading or PSAT scores, to determine if individuals are eligible for the program. A representative from Network Connect explained that young people are sometimes not given the same level of attention as adults in the workforce development system due to their age. Therefore, youth-serving organizations are vital to ensuring that young people have the skills and experience needed to thrive in the workforce.

In other programs, residence in Delaware is a requirement to participate in the program. Some programs specifically require that the participant be a resident of a certain Delaware county or a

particular subpopulation to receive services. This type of eligibility requirement is often a strategy for targeting limited program funding. Two organizations mentioned limiting their services to a particular county due to both inadequate funding for some of their programs and requirements attached to funding from the Department of Labor. One of the programs limits eligibility to focus on out-of-school youth, while the second program requires participants to live in New Castle County.

A majority of the interviewees' programs (13 of the 23) do not impose geographic eligibility requirements and serve clients statewide. The goal of these organizations is to open their programs to anyone who is a resident of Delaware and may be in need of workforce and employment services. There are no requirements, prerequisites, or prior experience necessary for participants to join the program. Although New Castle County tends to be the primary area of focus of these statewide programs, most of them offer their services to Kent and Sussex Counties to reach more populations in need, including communities of color.

Communities Served

A recurring theme in all of the interviews was the organizations' commitment to serving high-need, underserved, and underresourced communities. These communities were identified as the primary focus of the majority of the organizations interviewed. To serve these communities, most of the organizations target Promise Community zip codes. Residents of Promise Communities frequently face barriers that hinder them from thriving, such as lack of adequate transportation, insufficient affordable housing, and limited or low-paying local labor market opportunities. These barriers inhibit residents of these communities from accessing important services and jobs that can lead to economic mobility. The zip codes linked to Promise Communities that were mentioned by representatives of workforce development programs during interviews—19801, 19802, 19803, 19804, 19805, 19720, and the Route 9 corridor—are communities primarily concentrated in New Castle County, although the Route 9 corridor does extend into Kent County. Therefore, although several interviewees described working in Kent and Sussex Counties, their specific engagement with Promise Communities is weighted toward New Castle County.

The interviewed workforce development programs also target communities by assessing their average income level, demographic composition, and residents' justice involvement. Some interviewees mentioned serving low-income communities with a high number of households with incomes within 200–300 percent of the federal poverty line. These communities frequently overlap with Promise Communities. Some programs target communities with high populations of residents of color in addition

to targeting low-income communities to ensure racial equity in service provision. Workforce programs often reach these communities by engaging with local community-based organizations.

Interviewees unanimously characterized New Castle County as the most serviced county in the state. Though Sussex and Kent Counties are served as well, interviewees indicated that the majority of their participants are from New Castle County. A representative from Delaware Skills Center explained that the urban centers in New Castle County offer plentiful opportunities to obtain a fulfilling career.

Access Challenges

Several interviewees identified barriers that individuals face in accessing or obtaining their services. The top challenge identified in the interviews was reliable transportation, particularly in Promise Communities and other high-need communities. Due to the lack of access to reliable transportation in these areas, some participants face challenges in being able to attend program sessions at the organization. Two of the interviewees specifically mentioned that their programs provide transportation assistance to their participants.

Another reported challenge that both participants and programs face is access to financial resources. An interviewee explained that in many cases, a high school or middle school can only offer a limited number of Delaware Pathways programs to students due to the limited funding for resources such as computers, internet access, welding machines, and other equipment required for training. As a result, some students are not able to train in certain career pathways due to a lack of training capacity. Moreover, schools strongly dissuade students from switching pathways because of the potential impact on the students' chances of graduating on time, thereby reducing the likelihood that students can access other pathways that may be of interest.

Recruitment Practices

Participants

The research team asked interviewees about how they target and recruit potential training participants, whether they target individuals from underrepresented or marginalized groups, and how they promote programs to potential participants. A number of common themes emerged in their responses.

Many traditional methods of outreach serve as the foundation of marketing and recruitment efforts for the interviewed programs, including

- in-person community events;

- paid radio, television, and newspaper advertisements;

- billboards and flyers;

- email communications; and

- recurring information and orientation sessions.

Larger educational institutions or education systems reported circulating course guides to inform communities about education and training they offer and how individuals can register for classes. Most organizations mentioned the central role that word-of-mouth peer recommendations play in their enrollment strategies. A training provider with Pathways to Success noted that "oftentimes, we don't necessarily have to go out and recruit. Most of the students bring a friend or they tell a friend about the program." Word of mouth is particularly important for organizations that have operated programs for at least 10 years and have robust relationships with the communities they serve.

Workforce development programs that responded to the survey reported several different types of efforts they make to advance racial equity in recruitment (table 7). The sample size for the survey is low, reflecting the low response rate, but the results offer a glimpse into the more prevalent strategies for incorporating a racial equity lens into recruitment efforts. Most of the participating programs indicated that they make efforts to actively recruit participants by reaching out to organizations that serve "historically marginalized communities" and more than two-thirds described using advertising material that target people of color.

TABLE 7
Programs' Efforts to Advance Racial Equity in Participant Recruitment

Activity	Programs Engaging in Racial Equity Activities	
	Number	Percentage
Actively recruits from nonprofits that serve historically marginalized communities	10	77%
Actively recruits from churches and other social institutions that serve historically marginalized communities	7	54%
Actively recruits from secondary schools where enrollment is predominantly students of color	6	46%
Actively recruits from postsecondary institutions where enrollment is predominantly students of color	3	23%
Uses advertisements or flyers targeted at people of color	9	69%
Has a formal affirmative action plan in place that guides participant recruitment practices	3	23%
Has an informal affirmative action plan in place that guides participant recruitment practices	4	31%
Recent selection, admissions, or hiring committee for participants includes people of color	7	54%
Has assessed its participant recruitment practices to understand how they affect the accessibility of the program	6	46%

Source: Urban Institute survey.

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could choose multiple activities.

Oftentimes, we don't necessarily have to go out and recruit; most of the students bring a friend or they tell a friend about the program.
—Interviewee

Many interviewees noted that they also rely on digital technology and platforms for outreach, especially social media. Through institutional account posts and paid advertisements on social media platforms, workforce development organizations are digitally—in addition to physically—going to the places their target audiences spend time. Representatives from the First State Tech Partnership discussed their intentions to use geolocating and geomarketing tools to help employers and training providers identify career seekers who are interested in IT positions. The equity implications of this innovative approach could work in different directions. Geolocating tools might help to identify individuals from underrepresented groups who might otherwise be overlooked for certain tech jobs.

Alternatively, these digital tools might exclude individuals who lack adequate internet access or the digital skills (Bergson-Shilcock and Taylor 2023) to be recognized by these technologies.

Some organizations expressed a recruitment philosophy grounded in delivering services to all who come seeking assistance. Organizations that serve youth are primarily interested in the age of their participants, rather than other aspects of their identity, and often partner with high schools to recruit students. However, many of the organizations intentionally target recruitment toward individuals from marginalized groups or underserved communities, even if they work with anyone seeking services. For example, organizations mentioned targeting individuals from low-income families, Black and Hispanic or Latino individuals, women, justice-involved individuals, and immigrants.

When discussing recruitment efforts, several organizations mentioned using dedicated outreach staff. For instance, First State Community Action Agency discussed their use of "community development specialists," who target every low-income community in Sussex, Kent, and New Castle Counties by attending community events, distributing program literature, and talking to community members about their needs and the services their organization can offer. Interviewees from Food Bank of Delaware mentioned that within the past several years they hired two staff members specifically dedicated to outreach and enrollment (the role was previously handled by case management staff). The dedicated outreach staff members go out into the community, promote the programs, and assist individuals throughout the intake process.

Selling Points

Urban Institute researchers asked organizations how they describe the benefits of their programs and what they believe resonates most with their participants at the time of enrollment.

A representative from Delaware State University made a notable comment about how the university has helped individuals, especially in the hospitality industry, to upskill and find new employment opportunities based on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The representative shared that one participant "was a waitress for 25 years, literally at one restaurant, and then when the restaurant closed, she didn't know what else to do. She was in her fifties. And so now she had to come back. So those are the kind of things that we really try to focus on, the well-being of the individual and their opportunity to find something they truly are passionate about and they can make a living because we know that with the pandemic, people are really looking at the value of work rather than just work."

Interview respondents mentioned numerous benefits that motivate individuals to enroll in their programs, many of which revolve around earnings and career pathways. The benefits they cited include the potential to increase their long-term earnings and the alignment of training with in-demand industries or jobs. Participants also see certain program components as beneficial, including availability of supportive services, willingness of programs to accept participants at their current skill level, opportunities to receive stackable credentials and on-ramps to a career path, and earn-and-learn opportunities. Training that did not impose a financial costs on participants is considered valuable, as is training that provides access to nontraditional career fields.

In addition to these tangible benefits to program participation, several organizations noted the importance of conveying that they truly care about those whom they serve. One training provider described the reputation their organization has built: "The word on the street, basically, is that we care."

The word on the street, basically, is that we care. I'll be honest with you. We care about whether they come to school. We care about whether they have jobs during the summer. Since we're going to talk about the work-based part of it, and we care that they get a fair wage for the work that they do because, yeah, we care. And it does make a big difference, especially when you know many of these kids are working to help subsidize their homes. —Interviewee

Employers

A salient benefit to potential participants is the promise of being matched with a well-paying job either during a program or upon program completion. To secure those job placements, organizations strive to build strong relationships with employers. Five training providers explained that they have dedicated business engagement staff who are tasked with building relationships with employers, understanding the nuances of their talent needs, and ensuring that their participants are well situated for employment. They also highlighted the importance of cultivating relationships with smaller employers as well as larger employers. Smaller employers often have closer ties to the community where they operate, and larger employers can provide the highest volume of opportunities.

Several organizations mentioned that they prefer formal agreements with employers to hire their graduates but that even in the absence of firm employer commitments, they aim to maintain lines of communication and match their participants to open positions. One way that training organizations secure formal and informal commitments to hire is by appealing to businesses' desire to diversify their workforce and widen their talent pipeline.

Interviewees had divergent perspectives on the ease with which training organizations engage employers in specific industries, but several industries were mentioned repeatedly as targets for strong partnerships. These target industries include IT, health care, hospitality, and financial services.

While it is important for individual training providers to develop personal relationships with business owners and human resource staff to secure opportunities for their participants, the workforce system can also engage and integrate employers more comprehensively into state talent pipelines and pathways. Individual relationships between training providers and selected employers will necessarily have a limited reach across the state. We spoke with several backbone and convening entities that are working with industry intermediaries to ensure there are mechanisms for representative bodies to communicate skill needs across a broader range of employers to organizations who provide workforce training. In this vein, in 2022, the Delaware Workforce Development Board commissioned a survey of employers in the state to better understand their hiring needs and perspectives in the post-COVID-19 period.[4] The survey found, among other things, that roughly 80 percent of respondents have positions available that do not require a college degree.

Training Practices

Career Pathway Preparation

Throughout the interviews with workforce training providers, the researchers asked about the degree to which their programs prepare participants for success throughout a career pathway that includes an initial job placement as well as subsequent progression and advancement in the field. While organizations' responses and practices vary, the notion of career pathway preparation for participants is important to most of them.

Three organizations reported that they essentially train participants for entry-level positions and not necessarily for roles beyond those initial rungs of the career ladder. While these training providers incorporate workplace skills training into their programming, take job quality into consideration for

placement, and provide case management services—all of which could help participants advance beyond an initial job—they do not typically deliver occupational skills training for higher-level jobs along a career pathway.

Delaware postsecondary institutions had the most formal structures for helping students advance along a career pathway. Depending on the industry environment and the nature of certain jobs, these educational institutions try to offer shorter-term credential programs. After completion of these programs, students can immediately obtain a job. Once employed, they can continue to work while they obtain more advanced credentials and position themselves to progress along a defined career pathway. For example, a student might complete the appropriate training and obtain a job as a machine operator, then continue training to become a fully qualified technician, and ultimately complete additional training to become an industrial mechanic. An interviewee from Delaware Technical and Community College described how "we create these stackable [credentials] and on- and off-ramps to give students an opportunity to gain the skill, get a job, and then come back and get the other skills." Importantly, Delaware Pathways, the state's high school career and technical education programs, are designed to align with Delaware's technical and community college system, allowing students to begin their career training as teenagers and—ideally—seamlessly continue it into adulthood.

Five of the training organizations described how they integrate career pathway preparation into their program structure. Several organizations assist participants in defining their personal career pathway through a formal plan or simply through conversations with program staff. Some programs advise participants about what positions they are suited for, while others help them by identifying the next training program in their envisioned career pathway, which could include courses at a postsecondary institution. Other organizations noted that they provide different levels of skills training and encourage their participants to return for additional classes.

Structured career pathways are an established workforce development strategy, but career pathways alone do not guarantee equitable outcomes. Each step in a career pathway must ensure racial equity to enhance equitable outcomes for workers throughout their working careers. Parity at the beginning of a worker's career will not generate equitable outcomes if retention, promotion, and wage growth are not persistently equitable. The Urban Institute survey asked whether and how workforce development programs use career pathway preparation to achieve more equitable outcomes for their participants. Few organizations who responded to the survey indicated that they have formal assessments related to tracking racial equity in program retention and completion over time (table 8). The most common activities involved career pathways: programs helped with navigating participants to the next step of the career pathway (7 out of 13), engaged with partners on designing career

trajectories (6 out of 13), and worked on building bridges to programs or employment opportunities at the next step in the career pathway (6 out of 13).

Programs' Efforts to Advance Racial Equity in Participant Advancement

Activity	Programs Engaging in Racial Equity Activities	
	Number	Percentage
Performs formal assessments or tracking of racial equity in program retention	2	15%
Performs formal assessments or tracking of racial equity in program completion	2	15%
Bridges to programs or employment opportunities on the next step of the career pathway	6	46%
Engages with partners at the next step of the career pathway to help them advance racial equity in their recruitment, hiring, and operations	6	46%
Offers navigation services to guide participants to the next step of the career pathway	7	54%

Source: Urban Institute survey.

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could choose multiple activities.

In an effort to foster a guided approach to career pathway planning and preparation that began earlier in a student's education, UWDE, Delaware Workforce Development Board, Capital School District, Dover High School, Delaware Department of Education, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, and a statewide network of community partners launched the Success for Our Seniors program.[5] The program aims to ensure that every high school senior in Delaware has the knowledge and guidance to identify the path they intend to take upon graduation, the tools to execute their career pathway plan, and access to resources to assist them in navigating barriers.

Occupations, Industries, and Certifications

The researchers asked interviewees to provide a list of industries and occupations that were of focus in their programs. These are the top three sectors and associated career fields identified by interviewees:

- **IT:** software developer, computer programmer, application developer, IT support staff, IT specialist, and data analyst

- **Health care:** licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, certified nurse assistant, home health aide, medical secretary, and lab technician

- **Skilled trades:** positions in construction; transportation; manufacturing and industrial; agriculture; electrical; carpentry; welding; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC); food protection; and logistics and operations

The IT and health care fields have been a primary focus of workforce development professionals because of the high demand in those industries and occupations, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the interviewed Delaware workforce development programs focus on the IT sector as way to close the digital divide in Delaware, particularly for people of color and underserved communities who may not have access to certain technologies or broadband internet. The focus on IT is an opportunity to give these populations the chance to work in high-quality jobs but also to support digital inclusion.

In addition to the training provided, participants are able to obtain certifications to show that they have acquired the necessary skills needed for employment in an industry or occupation. Industry-recognized certifications and credentials can help level the playing field by proving the occupational skills of individuals who were educated in underresourced school systems that are discounted by employers. The Food Bank of Delaware explained that certifications can enhance the participants' prospects for attaining employment and earning higher wages. The representative offered this example: "We had a graduate who was offered a job by an employer. However, when the employer realized he had the extra certification, his pay on the job offer went up by a dollar an hour."

The workforce development program staff interviewed by the research team identified many industry-recognized certifications and credentials that participants could earn, including the following:

- ServSafe food handler certification

- Certified logistics associate certification

- Certified logistics technician certification

- OSHA 10-hour construction certification

- OSHA 10-hour general industry certification

- Forklift certification

- Oracle certified associate certification

- Cisco certified network associate certification

- Delaware State electrical apprentice license

- CompTIA A+ certification

- CompTIA Network+ certification

- Licensed practical nurse certification

- Certified nurse assistant certification

Industry-recognized credentials such as these can enhance or impede equity in labor markets. They can allow participants to gain valuable credentials without going into debt or spending far higher sums on degree programs. However, depending on how they are designed, marketed, and conferred, they can also reproduce inequities, depending on who has access to them and what benefits they offer. Much like career pathways, credentials will only advance equity if the institutions and systems that award and assign value to them are equitable, along with the employers that ultimately hire workers.

Program Design

Employer Input

There are a variety of ways in which programming is informed by employer input and a variety of ways that input is gathered and implemented, including through the following sources:

- Employer advisory groups and industry councils

- Surveys

- Instructors with relevant industry experience

- Existing industry associations and local chambers of commerce

- Real-time conversations with employers of program participants

- Informal discussions with employers

At least six organizations mentioned using employer advisory groups or industry councils to inform the design of their program. To supplement this type of feedback, organizations have informal conversations with employers through their business engagement staff. In these discussions, workforce development organizations ask for feedback on the performance of their participants and employer insights on observable skills gaps or valuable credentials. Several organizations noted feedback from employers on the professional skills of their participants. This input led to the expansion of professional

skills development training within the program. Training in professional skills development includes instruction on time management, money management, and customer service. This is particularly important for youth-serving organizations whose participants might be entering their first professional situations.

An alternative to having a formal advisory committee is to tap into existing industry associations and local chambers of commerce. This strategy grants organizations access to employers and their needs and preferences through a trusted intermediary without creating additional burdens on employers. Similarly, several organizations use labor market information produced by the Delaware Department of Labor, as well as job postings, to get a sense of what employers need and how they might tailor their programs to meet those demands.

Multiple organizations interviewed use the registered apprenticeship training model in their programs. Registered apprenticeship programs are structured training programs in which training is delivered through a combination of classroom-based instruction and paid, mentored, on-the-job learning. Apprenticeship has the advantage of being driven by and customized to employer needs. Employer input is built into the design of apprenticeship programs, ensuring their perspective is reflected in the overall design.

Several interviewees brought up the Delaware Pathways initiative, and how it provides an important forum for employers across an industry to provide input into career and technical training program design. One challenge that was mentioned is identifying common ground among employers for program design elements for Pathways programs when their needs and preferences aren't precisely aligned. To address this difficulty, one suggestion was to obtain feedback from employers earlier in the program design process, rather than waiting for their reaction to program standards that have already been developed. Another interviewee suggested that although they engaged employers to provide a career pathway for participants, they believed they could improve on their efforts to speak with employers about the imperative of advancing racial equity and strategies to accomplish it.

Job Placement Activities & Job Quality Requirements

For the organizations interviewed, it is common practice for programs that offer occupational skills training to ensure that participants obtain job placement in targeted industries and occupations. Participants often have access to job readiness and job search assistance as well as job placement services such as mock interviews and resume and etiquette instruction. According to the interviews, these job placement services are crucial in supporting participants to gain employment, particularly

those who struggle to find a job after completing the program. To ensure that participants can maintain their jobs, many programs follow up with participants to track whether they are still employed. Two of the programs mentioned opening their services to alumni who want extra training or additional certifications to either maintain their job placements or build on knowledge and skills in an industry in which they are working.

Throughout Urban's interviews, it became clear that ensuring that participants obtain quality jobs is a vital aspect of workforce development organizations' relationships with employers. Virtually all training organizations reported that they consider job quality, although the degree to which they do varies widely. At the most formal level, organizations enter into signed agreements with employers that describe each party's roles and responsibilities and ensure that employers meet certain standards. These agreements are typically accompanied with site visits by the training provider to ensure that employers are abiding by their obligations. These arrangements were more likely to be reported by youth-serving organizations. Similarly, several organizations noted that they sever relationships with employers that break these agreements or otherwise mistreat their program participants or graduates.

These efforts to ensure job quality are critical for advancing racial equity. In the absence of clear job quality standards, white graduates of workforce development programs are more likely than graduates of color to be able to draw on more privileged social networks and to be the beneficiaries of positive stereotypes from employers. Equity in participant outcomes is supported when training providers ensure that employers treat all graduates appropriately and equitably.

We will remove the student and we'll find another place for them to go. Absolutely. And then we take [the employer] off our list. I mean, you get one shot and I know that this might sound harsh, but we have to make sure that our kids know that they're valued and valuable and know that their vision for themselves is real and that we are going to do everything we can to make real that vision.
—Interviewee

Some workforce programs that do not establish formal agreements with their employer partners have informal conversations with employers about their wages, benefits, promotion processes, and general work environments to determine if they would be suitable hiring or work-based learning

partners. While the organizations interviewed did not articulate specific standards for these elements of job quality, they seek to ensure that the wages are reasonable and not exploitative; the benefits offered include health insurance, paid leave, and professional development support; and the work environment fosters camaraderie and growth.

On the most informal end of the spectrum, some organizations noted that while job quality is important conceptually, it is not codified in practice. For instance, these organizations consider an employer's reputation for their treatment of employees, the way they present themselves publicly, and whether they have known and documented issues with staff turnover.

Surveyed workforce development programs secure quality jobs for their participants in many ways (table 9). The most common activity reported was advocating for local, state, or federal policies to improve job quality, benefits, or other issues (7 out of 13); cultivating relationships with employers who actively commit to racial equity in hiring (6 out of 13); and ensuring that participant jobs are high quality (6 out of 13).

TABLE 9

Programs' Efforts to Advance Racial Equity in Participant Job Placement

Activity	Programs Engaging in Racial Equity Activities	
	Number	Percentage
Cultivates relationships with employers who actively commit to racial equity in hiring	6	46%
Cultivates relationships with employers who ensure that their jobs are high quality	6	46%
Provides technical assistance or advice to partner employers on how to ensure equitable hiring and promotion practices	3	23%
Assesses employers' success in advancing racial equity in the workplace	3	23%
Advocates for local, state, or federal policies to improve job quality, benefits, or other issues	7	54%

Source: Urban Institute survey.

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could choose multiple activities.

Participant Input

Employers are not the only party with valuable insights into training programs; participant and worker perspectives are also valuable for program design, implementation, and adaptation. Nearly all training providers administer participant surveys either during or at the end of their program. Three organizations reported that they include participants on advisory councils, some of which are exclusively composed of participants and some of participants and other program stakeholders. Five

providers explicitly noted that they have informal mechanisms for participants to submit their feedback, such as an "open door" policy with administrators or anonymous suggestion boxes.

[Surveys] are a really helpful tool in identifying what we could be doing better and then what pieces of our program students are responding the best to.
—Interviewee

None of the organizations interviewed articulated a way for potential participants or workers to weigh in on initial program design; their methods of feedback are focused on program implementation. Many of the organizations described various ways that participant feedback has resulted in modest adjustments to program implementation, such as on instructor selection, credential offerings, the use of technology, and the supports participants receive. Multiple interviewees also noted that while their organizations consider feedback from participants, they are not always able to apply the suggestions in practice.

Retention and Supports

Equitable outcomes for participants in workforce development programs is not guaranteed by access and inclusion in the program if there are structural barriers preventing participants from advancing through and completing training. Retention in workforce programs is determined by many factors, but one strategy for ensuring that all participants have an equal chance at retention regardless of their race or ethnicity is to provide supportive services that fulfill needs and help participants overcome barriers that exist as a result of structural inequalities. In the interviews, workforce development organizations were asked about the provision of wraparound services that help participants overcome barriers to training and employment—both the services that the organization provides directly and the referrals to other organizations it provides to help participants meet specific needs (table 10).

TABLE 10
Programs' Efforts to Address Racial Equity in Participant Retention and Progress

Activity	Programs Engaging in Racial Equity Activities	
	Number	Percentage
Case managers and supportive service providers include people of color	9	69%
Provides training to ensure that staff are adequately equipped to recognize their unconscious biases	8	62%
Organized so that all participants regularly meet with staff members to ensure that their needs are addressed	9	69%
Provides all participants with the opportunity to meet with staff members to ensure that their needs are addressed	9	69%
Provides academic supports, such as tutoring, to participants	7	54%
Provides transportation assistance to participants	3	23%
Provides child care assistance to participants	1	8%
Provides a general stipend to participants	1	8%

Source: Urban Institute survey.

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could choose multiple activities.

Wraparound Services

Most of the organizations interviewed have a staff role designed to support participants throughout and sometimes after their program participation. These roles have different titles—counselor, case manager, ambassador, coordinator, navigational coach—and differing responsibilities, but they share a common goal of ensuring that participants have the support they need to succeed throughout training and in the workforce. These staff members provide a variety of services, ranging from offering mentorship, goal setting, and job placement services to connecting participants to services provided by other organizations or government entities. For youth who are in school, staff might also make sure they are attending their classes, have access to tutoring services, or have a space to complete homework after school.

A PolicyLink report notes that "men of color, particularly African American men from low-income communities who have prior criminal convictions or who are chronically un- and underemployed, face significant barriers to gaining and maintaining employment" (Philpart and Rose 2015). Underscoring the importance of wraparound services, the report notes that "ensuring that workers have access to and are equipped with the human, social, and cultural capital and support to facilitate their transition into the workforce and back into society" is critical. A research report examining whether there is evidence that support services in workforce development led to better outcomes found that the limited amount of

literature investigating this question suggests a positive correlation between the provision of support services and training and employment success (Hess et al. 2016).

Many organizations interviewed provide stipends to participants, which serve as both incentives to enroll and support to help participants remain in the program. These stipends ensure that participants are not completely foregoing earnings to learn new skills and stipend funds can be used however participants choose. Stipends can also promote racial equity by ensuring that participants of color—often underresourced due to systemic barriers—are not bearing additional burdens to remain in their training programs. Since transportation costs can be a barrier to success, several organizations provide participants with bus passes to travel to and from training or work.

Several organizations noted that they provide laptops and hotspots to participants so that they have the technology and connectivity to fully participate in training, especially as the opportunities grow for remote learning and engagement. A couple of organizations also reported that they provide emergency financial supports such as money to secure housing and afford utilities.

Network Connect uses Black survival education in their program, which entails education about Black mental health trauma, including how it manifests generally and at the workplace, how to recognize it in coworkers, and how to respond to it. The Black survival education training also teaches participants how to identify and overcome anti-Black stereotypes. Race-based traumatic stressors can arise from direct experiences and observed encounters, and the myriad ways they can manifest at one's place of employment underscores the relevance of this type of education in workforce development programming.[6] Similarly, a representative from another organization talked about how they provide training related to behavioral health—including education about managing reactions, developing constructive practices, setting boundaries, and practicing self-advocacy. These intensive training programs equip participants with the skills and resources they need to successfully overcome barriers outside the context of the program itself.

Connections to Other Social Service Agencies

The workforce development organizations were asked about how they refer to and connect participants with other entities that might assist them, including to meet needs related to child care, transportation, housing, food and nutrition, expunging criminal records, and mental health.

Several organizations noted critical barriers to accessing services, especially those provided by state agencies. For example, they mentioned the "benefits cliff," referring to individuals participating in

multiple income-support programs who are at risk of rapidly losing benefits from several programs simultaneously when they pass certain income or asset thresholds. They also reported arduous or duplicative enrollment and application processes, the outsized role of personal perseverance required of participants, and the helpfulness of individual state agency staff members in guaranteeing the success of engagement with public agencies. These types of dependencies on personal perseverance or the receptiveness of agency staff to a client can reproduce the existing marginalization of people of color. These observations were echoed in the racial equity–focused sections of the interviews, as interviewees emphasized the importance of addressing barriers not directly related to training or employment that impact a person's ability to complete training and retain employment.

Challenges Faced by People of Color

Workforce development organizations' interview responses about supportive and wraparound services closely correspond to the most significant barriers to success faced by participants of color reported by these organizations. The following barriers to success were reported by multiple organizations:

- Access to transportation (especially for youth)

- Level and quality of prior education

- Financial needs, including a reluctance to share financial information

- Access to affordable, accessible child care

- Access to affordable and safe housing

- Racism and racial biases, including the perception that people of color do not belong in certain spaces

It is extremely difficult to find affordable housing and it impacts all aspects of your life. It's almost impossible to help someone maintain employment when they have no secure housing. —Interviewee

In addition to these challenges, other barriers that were noted included mental health and well-being, access to quality health care, language barriers, food assistance needs, employment challenges related to having a criminal record, and lack of awareness of opportunities for career advancement.

Measuring and Addressing Racial Equity

The Urban researchers shared their definition of racial equity with interview participants (box 1): "the state in which one's identity has no bearing on their outcomes. In workforce development, equity means that one's identity doesn't determine their access to livable, steady wages; access to benefits; or opportunities for career advancement." Interviewees were then asked to reflect on the definition and describe whether they would modify it in any way.

Most interviewees said they agreed with the definition of equity. Some interviewees said they would add other criteria, such as looking to histories of injustices participants have experienced, helping participants understand structural issues that have produced or impacted the conditions they face, and ensuring that participant outcomes include a "wealth-generating wage."[7]

Another way [we assess equity] is we'll look and see if they were given the same opportunity. So it's not just where it would go forward, it's what happened before, too.... So if they're underrepresented or they're underserved or unemployed or underemployed, that's something that has already happened, right?
—Interviewee

The National Skills Coalition and Prosperity Now recommend that workforce development providers collect data and assess outcomes, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. This analysis will help organizations understand if different racial and ethnic groups are achieving equitable outcomes and—if not—take steps to make changes and/or advocate for structural change.

Most interviewed workforce development providers collect demographic information about participants, including their race and ethnicity. How that information is used varies. About a third of interviewees shared that they collect demographic information and therefore could measure, for

example, how many people participate and complete training, but that they do not currently specifically assess outcomes such as job placements and wages by race and ethnicity.

What we would track is, sort of, outputs, right—like, oh, we've had X number [of] program graduates, we've had X number of program graduates that get jobs. You know, what are the wages, those things? And a lot of that's outputs. But then, like I mentioned, sort of disaggregating the data and looking deeper to say, well, [are] there disparities in [those] data? Because if there [are], we need to better understand that so that we can make adjustments in the programs to improve those outcomes.
—Interviewee

Half of the interviewees said their organizations internally review outputs and some outcomes by race and ethnicity, including completion of training programs, job placement, and wages. Some participants acknowledged that their data collection and reporting efforts are new or in the process of being improved. Funder reporting requirements are an important determinant of how organizations track and use data. One organization noted that they collect detailed information to report to the federal government, although the federal government itself does not require an analysis of racial equity. This has resulted in underutilized data, but it has provided a foundation for recent efforts by the organization to analyze and discuss racial equity in their program. Few organizations that responded to the Urban Institute survey formally assess racial equity in program retention and completion. This suggests that one strategy for centering racial equity in workforce development is to change the types of data that funders require and the analyses that funders expect from programs.

[Before], we didn't use the data … [data] came in, [were] put in the spreadsheet. There was a little bit of narrative, and it went to the Feds and everyone went about their business. There was literally no discussion of what we were seeing. Now we're sitting around the table talking about it.
—Interviewee

Of the organizations that are tracking outcomes by race and ethnicity, just one said they did not find any statistically significant racial disparities in outcomes. The rest, however, noted differences in outcomes for participants of color. Three workforce program interviewees observed that white participants had better job or apprenticeship placements than people of color. Another noted that Black men had worse educational outcomes than any other group of participants. One interviewee described how their data tracking by race and ethnicity provided insights into participation rates as well. They noted that among participants of color, women, especially Black women, tended to participate in programs more often than men.

[We had a group] of predominantly white [participants] and the placement rate for those kids was crazy. Like, we usually struggle to place [them] all, but with that group, we were able to place them in 15 days—all [the] kids. And it's, some of it … is [that] an employer sees that group in a different light. And so it's just easier to place them. They also don't have the same struggles. Where we have to find transportation for our youth, [and] those [youth] … don't have that problem often. The other piece is the knowledge they're learning at a higher level. And so they come to the to the job with some background knowledge that our teams don't usually get until they get into the work experience itself.
—Interviewee

Program Operations and Staffing

Activities to advance racial equity for participants is paramount, but so is equity among workforce program staff. In some cases, staff are hired from the same communities as participants, they support their own families, and their experiences impact participant experiences. Staff that are from different communities than participants can best be of service by exercising cultural humility and fostering an inclusive and equitable training environment. The Building Movement Project (Kunreuther and Thomas-Breitfeld 2020) describes ways that nonprofits address diversity, equity, and inclusion among staff, leadership, and board members. One way is by increasing diversity internally by trying to recruit diverse staff, another by cultivating feelings of belonging and inclusion. The Building Movement Project's research revealed that establishing equitable policies was more favorable among nonprofit employees than training in racial equity.

To understand racial equity in workforce development program operations and staffing, researchers asked how organizations address racial equity in their internal practices, including setting plans and goals, hiring and training their staff, and composing their boards of directors (table 10). While the survey response rate was low, the results provide some insight into organizations' activities. All survey respondents indicated they used at least one type of strategy to advance racial equity within their own staffing and operational practices. The most common activity to ensure organizational racial equity was identifying the importance of racial equity in the overall mission or strategy (9 out of 13). Next common were human resources and related activities, such as "providing staff with the opportunity to safely report inequity, harassment, or bias in the organization" (8 out of 13), having policies in place to address equity and inclusion among staff and leadership (6 out of 13), and measuring and tracking organizational diversity among staff and leadership (6 out of 13).

TABLE 11
Programs' Internal Efforts to Address Racial Equity
Policies and practices related to hiring, recruiting, and educating staff and board members

Activity	Programs Engaging in Racial Equity Activities	
	Number	Percentage
Identifies the importance of racial equity in overall mission or strategy	9	69%
Ensures that more than half of the leadership of the organization includes people of color	4	31%
Offers training to staff on structural racism or systemic bias	4	31%
Develops recruitment strategies to improve diversity within staff and leadership	5	38%
Develops recruitment strategies to improve diversity with the board of directors	4	31%
Measures and tracks organizational diversity among staff and leadership	6	46%
Has policies in place to address equity and inclusion among staff and leadership	6	46%
Creates affinity groups or employee resource groups	2	15%
Measures and tracks staff perceptions of equity in the organization	4	31%
Provides staff with the opportunity to safely report inequity, harassment, or bias in the organization	8	62%

Source: Urban Institute survey.
Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could choose multiple activities.

Of the survey respondents, 38 percent noted that they have or are developing recruitment strategies to increase diversity within staff and leadership, and 31 percent are also doing this work with boards of directors. Interviewees echoed the importance of ensuring that staff reflect the demographic

composition of the individuals they serve. One interviewee shared that one strategy for achieving this goal was to recruit former program participants.

Advocacy

Aside from their role in providing education, training, and job placement, some workforce development programs also engage in advocacy in their communities and the state to enhance access to opportunities and improve job quality. Over half of surveyed workforce organizations indicated that their organizations are involved in "advocating for local, state, or federal policies to improve job quality, benefits, or other issues."

Racial equity advocacy may be a newer undertaking for many organizations. In interviews with Delaware stakeholders, the Urban researchers asked if programs are involved in racial justice advocacy or support for policies to address racial inequities. Four interviewees said their organizations do not engage in racial justice advocacy, with one citing perceived constraints of their organization's 501(c)(3) status. Two interviewees noted that while their organization does not institutionally engage in advocacy, staff participate in advocacy work in a personal capacity. Another shared that their organization tries to encourage employer partners to think about diversity and hire from their pipeline of participants of color and women. Other interviewees indicated a few ways that their organization works to advance equity, including being involved in the Delaware Racial Justice Collaborative (DRJC), a coalition of over 200 organizations in the state focused on ending systemic racism, including in education, youth development, criminal justice, health, and wealth creation. DRJC has advocated for passage of Delaware House Bill 205,[8] which would provide more opportunities for workers to save for retirement, regardless of the structure of their work arrangement. Interviewees described partnering with other organizations, using their voices to speak out on topics such as the racial digital divide, and approaching legislators on improving conditions in communities and expanding funding for workforce development.

We, as an organization, more and more, [are] getting engaged on the advocacy and policy side in recognition that that no matter how many programs we [have], if we don't change the systemic injustices that are baked into policies, none of those programs and funds are actually going to help much.
—Interviewee

Challenges in Addressing Racial Equity

Strategies to address racial equity are not limited to the list of activities included in the Urban Institute survey, so the survey included an open-ended question asking, "What barriers does your program experience when it comes to addressing racial equity?" Some respondents noted that communicating about racial equity was a challenge, including finding ways to "speak about it honestly and openly" and finding channels for discussion.

Some interviewees noted ways their programs could better recruit and serve particular communities, including Hispanic or Latino Delawareans and people with disabilities. Others noted counterintuitive and counterproductive barriers related to funding. One interviewee shared that their organization is ineligible for some state Department of Labor funding because they pay their participants a rate deemed too high to qualify for additional support. The feedback they received was that the agency "would have funded us because they love our program but they didn't have enough funds [and] they get red flags about how much we pay the kids." A workforce leader shared that "the state funding formula in K–12 is incredibly equal, so it's generous, but it's equal, so everyone generates the same amount of money." The leader suggested that the Department of Education's spending could be distributed more equitably by providing more funds to higher-need areas.

Deficits and Opportunities in Workforce Development

Study participants identified current challenges and proposed goals and opportunities to improve racial equity in Delaware's workforce development system. System challenges identified included discrimination in training and hiring, data deficits, a lack of goal setting and tracking, and a need for better collaboration among employers, workforce programs, and communities. Goals and opportunities identified by interviewees included developing a DEI strategy, improving data availability and

infrastructure and using it to assess outcomes, tackling discrimination, making program improvements so more participants of color can access and complete programs, and focusing on high-wage opportunities.

Deficits in the Workforce Development System

The interviewees shared the following challenges to racial equity in workforce development.

Ongoing discrimination. Study participants described the lack of diversity in Delaware's workforce systems, including among participants engaged in registered apprenticeships and among those working in fields such as IT. Many interviewees pointed to a dearth of teachers of color in the K–12 system, suggesting that the lack of representation has an impact on the students. A 2017 Delaware Department of Education study on racial diversity in the state's teacher workforce confirms these reports (DDOE 2017).[9] Several interviewees pointed to outright discrimination among employers that are unwilling or reluctant to hire people of color. Two interviewees discussed nepotism and the need to have a connection to get ahead, one participant describing it as the "Delaware way." The "Delaware way" is sometimes referred to fondly as a community- or relationship-based business environment, but this approach to business in the state can exclude and discriminate against marginalized people, reproducing racial inequity.

Lack of data infrastructure and availability. Interviewees were concerned with accessing and using data to understand participant outcomes by race and ethnicity. However, they noted challenges with Delaware's workforce data ecosystem. One interviewee described frustrations with the lack of connection across data systems, wishing for referrals for participants from the state Department of Labor to services delivered by other agencies, such as Delaware Health and Social Services. Another wished that any requests for data from other agencies could be posted in one unified system to save time and resources, particularly for smaller programs. Four interviewees shared that there is insufficient data on workforce program participant outcomes, such as wages. For instance, one interviewee shared that having data directly from state Department of Labor wage records, rather than trying to survey past participants, would yield a stronger understanding of program effectiveness.

We've been promised forever that we can have access to our state's UI [unemployment insurance] data and I still don't have it. Why does that matter? Because it allows me to see how effective my programming is. Now we chase down [those] data … with our students and I go to employers. [With UI] I'm gonna have a lot more data to work with and that allows me to look at things and see, "OK. Well, with this population … with those who identify as Hispanic, what [do] their employment outcomes look like in the end?" … Obviously, more data is better.
—Interviewee

Lack of goal setting and progress tracking. Some interviewees said the workforce development system needs to do a better job of developing a statewide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy; setting goals; and tracking progress related to participant outcomes and equity. One interviewee shared that there is no DEI strategy in the state. Another called for "more accountability" and pointed out that some "some organizations are funded over and over again, no matter how [few] children they served." Similarly, another training provider recommended that "whatever you're trying to do, use data to actually back it up, because … a lot of times we're saying things, but no one's really fact checking."

Lack of connection between organizations, employers, and community. Some interviewees described weaknesses in partnerships, including between community organizations and employers, among workforce development organizations, and between funders. One participant mentioned the competition that exists between organizations for funding. Another interviewee said that the workforce development system has not done a sufficient job of listening to communities and bringing people together. They added, "there [are] so many people making decisions that affect other people, but they never listen to what those people have to say."

We're fighting each other there for diluting the dollars that are available for workforce development and all at the end. None of this is really helping the community the way that we wanted to.
—Interviewee

Opportunities for Addressing Racial Equity

Workforce development program staff shared several suggestions on how the state of Delaware can better address racial equity in the workforce systems. Generally, interviewees felt that program participants, including trainees and students, reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Delaware. One participant shared that the diversity of Delaware itself is an asset and a feature that will be "incredibly attractive to employers."

When asked who the workforce development system should target, most interviewees said the system should continue to focus on communities of color, including Black and Hispanic or Latino people. Other groups the interviewees felt should be targeted were immigrants; young adults; individuals with low incomes, including those residing in Promise Communities; and justice-involved individuals.

The researchers asked interviewees about their suggestions for specific goals to address racial equity in the Delaware workforce development system, and the following recommendations emerged.

1. **Develop a strategy and goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; be vocal and intentional; and measure progress.**

When asked what Delaware's goals should be for improving racial equity, some interviewees said that Delaware should develop a DEI plan. One interviewee shared that just saying "we're trying to increase diversity," without "something specific tied to it" leads to "confusion or lack of trust because people hear one thing and see another and [see a] lack of dedication." Others felt that the state should be more vocal about the importance of racial equity, including naming the problem and acknowledging that some racial groups are underrepresented, setting goals, being "intentional" and deliberate in taking actions to improve equity, and measuring progress toward the goals.[10]

I think Delaware has to be okay with saying they're looking to diversify the workforce ... then you have to be able to be firm and okay with saying that there is an issue and this is how you're going to tackle it. What I find [is that] many times people may say they are interested in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion ... but they're not okay with saying, "We have underrepresentation by a specific group." So I think the state of Delaware has to be a little more vocal about what they're trying to solve, and I think you have to have programming that is specific to meet that need.
—Interviewee

2. **Improve data collection and infrastructure and leverage it to measure outcomes.**

Workforce development providers and intermediaries identified the need for a real DEI strategy, goal setting, and efforts to measure progress. One way to do that is through data. Some participants shared that the state Department of Labor has "good statistics" on unemployment, underemployment, and wages. Many interviewees wanted to see the workforce development system better leverage those data to understand participant outcomes. For instance, one interviewee wanted to see unemployment wage records to track how their program's trainees fared after program completion. Another workforce development provider wanted the state to share data on how workforce development funding works— how it is used, who is impacted, and what the results are, especially in terms of economic mobility.[11]

I would love to see how the funding is impacting and who is it impacting. What are those outcomes? [Do] the data tell us something? It'd be great if there was some type of tool that we can run our own data or if there were reports that came out on a continuous basis. If we're talking about workforce training specifically, how are we doing? If people are getting training, are they getting jobs in the areas that [they] are training in? What are those wages? Are they better off than they were before they started training? ... Are those dollars going more toward people who are unemployed or underemployed? [What about] the demographics?
—Interviewee

3. **Increase diversity and inclusion by removing barriers to training and career pathways and addressing discrimination.**

Workforce development providers pointed to the lack of diversity in the workforce system, including in apprenticeships and well-paying sectors like technology. Several participants said one of the state's goals should be to improve diversity and they shared several ways to do this:

- Understand what policies are in place to ensure that people of color have employment opportunities and—when they are in positions of power—do not face mistreatment. This would include investigating why existing policies are not working and ensuring there are consequences when discrimination takes place.

- Ensure that there are conscious efforts among K–12 education system leaders to improve the diversity of participants and promote and offer opportunities for all qualified individuals, especially people of color.

- Remove inflated education requirements for jobs so that people with less than a college degree but sufficient skills or work experience are eligible for opportunities.

- Adjust apprenticeship ratios[12] that regulate the number of apprentices that can enter a trade to ensure that access to well-paying jobs is not artificially restricted.

I think finding out why these [DEI] policies aren't working would be a great policy. That's your job. Go and figure out why these policies aren't working.
—Interviewee

4. **Make program improvements that center racial equity in recruitment and program services.**

Interviewees recommended various improvements to ensure that workforce development programs are better serving Delawareans:

- Implement additional efforts to promote programs and recruit participants, including people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people living in communities where there is a high proportion of people with low incomes. One interviewee was not "sure [Promise Communities] are still the most accurate representation of the high need communities,"

suggesting that it would be valuable for UWDE to review this list of communities. Others recommended that the workforce development system be more "proactive," especially for people who may have hit "rock bottom." One interviewee said that providers should "really go out into the community and really talk about what services there are … before you get to a place where you're at your last straw."

- Reduce bureaucratic barriers and technological enrollment requirements so that it is easier for people to enroll in and participate in workforce development programs.

Create stronger partnerships with public and private social service agencies to ensure that participants have access to assistance with basic needs that impact their livelihoods, including housing and health care. Participants acknowledged organizations like the Wilmington Alliance and UWDE, both of which have made efforts to provide wrap around services and offer mobile vehicles so participants can ask questions about programs. Still, some interviewees wanted to see "more capacity" to cover a broader number of Delawareans.

I think we have to simplify things for individuals that need them … for lack of a better word, cut out the red tape; in terms of enrollment, follow up…. I understand you need data for federal dollars and all those reporting systems, but I think we need to simplify a system [so] if I go in as an unemployed individual, then [I see] the resources provided for me and where I can go to be trained and get to work. I just want to see our overall systems … simplify, so there's less red tape [because when] people have to continue to come back or they don't have a document or whatever—then they leave, they don't come back.
—Interviewee

5. **Focus on high wages.**

Several interviewees wanted to see the state of Delaware work on ensuring that people have access to high-paying jobs. Another training provider said, "there's employment out there, but it's not employment for self-sufficiency." The provider thought that "we [should] expand those opportunities of employment to achieve self-sufficiency where someone is not so dependent on government assistance or having to work multiple jobs to be able to support themselves." Such efforts could be a place for

additional advocacy efforts for workforce development programs. Interviewees also recommended the following:

- Boost wages across the board and support a $15 state minimum wage. Some interviewees recommended passage of the federal Fair Wage Act.

- Make efforts to diversify occupations and industries that have potential for high wages. One interviewee noted that "more broadly, folks of color are underrepresented in our highest-paid sectors." Interviewees recommended targeting skilled trades, such as construction, agriculture, and agribusiness, and including apprenticeships in these fields; health care; technology; and jobs with the state of Delaware, the state's "largest employer."

The state [government] is the largest employer in the state of Delaware.... The state does not have a strong DEI strategy … I think there are like 2,000 or 3,000 jobs that the state has open right now. There's a bunch that the state could do: remove artificial degree inflation [and] move to skills-based hiring practice[s]—several states have done that; they could engage in apprenticeship, internship, [and] other types of cooperative on-the-job education training models. They don't engage with the Workforce Development Board, [which] by its nature is designed to support employers.
—Interviewee

6. **Build more partnerships to ensure collaboration between workforce development providers and intermediaries.**

Interviewees recommended building closer partnerships among workforce development providers to remove duplication and ensure that more participants are served. One training provider shared the following experience due to a lack of communication and collaboration: "We have this service over here, but we're running out of funds, but I'm doing the same service across the street, [and] instead of us communicating and sharing the responsibility or the workload, one holds on to it until those resources are diminished." To address these issues, interviewees suggested fostering more partnerships between workforce development providers and other important actors, such as social services, employers, and the community.

7. **Ensure equity in funding and make racial equity part of the criteria.**

One interviewee recommended that not only should workforce development providers work together and avoid competition, but that funders should do the same. Another suggested that to encourage more action to address equity gaps, funders' requests for proposals should include questions about racial equity, and "bonus points" should be awarded based on how applicants respond. A staff member of one program recommended that the state Department of Education revise its K–12 formula from one that is "equal" (e.g., all schools receive the same funding) to one that is equitable (e.g., more resources are devoted to areas that are underserved).

I would force organizations to work together. You just have to work together and the funders to do the same thing. Funders, work together, stop competing with each other. Let's use the data to be intentional with the community that we're trying to have that impact on, and work together. Stop the fighting…. One particular organization got a huge grant, $4 million–ish, and they're supposed to disperse it with other organizations, but then they pick and choose their favorites, and then all of a sudden there's competition that didn't necessarily need to be…. We just need to do a better job … to actually just make sure that it's been equitable and fair across the ecosystem and making sure that people are working together so they have the larger impact.
—Interviewee

Models for Addressing Racial Equity, Opportunities for Growing Industries, and Possibilities for Funding

In this section, we describe regional organizations that provide models for addressing racial equity inside and outside of Delaware, opportunities for sectors with growth potential, and possibilities for funding. These three model organizations address racial equity in workforce development from different perspectives. Humanim, in Baltimore, Maryland, provides robust interrelated services and advocacy for community hiring to support clients in their workforce development programs. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, in contrast, provides data tools to

support the work of workforce development programs in the state. Finally, the Chicago Jobs Council convenes workforce development programs in the city to orient them towards racial equity goals.

Models for Addressing Racial Equity

Several regional workforce development programs outside the state of Delaware can provide a model for reorienting workforce development in the state to advance racial equity. The following examples were identified based on research and suggestions from experts in workforce development: Humanim, the Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Department, and the Chicago Jobs Council.

Humanim. A staff member at Network Connect in Delaware described her experience with a robust network of workforce development providers focused on racial equity in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, highlighting especially the work of the nonprofit organization Humanim. Humanim's work revolves around the interrelated service areas of workforce development, human services, youth services, and social enterprise. The Network Connect staff member highlighted in particular that Humanim's commitment to equity extended to its relationship with employer partners who hired Humanim clients, noting that "they've been able to gather up employers, train them, and have them commit to hiring" following principles of inclusion and equity. Humanim's robust behavioral health, developmental disability, and deaf services help to ensure that employment is attainable for every individual in the community. Another key strategy of the organization that could be replicated in Delaware's workforce development programs is "community hiring," which strengthens "the economic backbone" of the communities that Humanim serves in Baltimore by helping employers meet their talent needs and strengthening the economic security of local families.[13] Humanim's equity statement clarifies that "diversity" exists in all complex societies, but "inclusion" must be deliberately created and protected. This requires an environment where "people feel supported, listened to, and able to do their personal best."[14]

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The state of Minnesota provides a model for tracking racial equity in workforce development programs at the program level through its Uniform Report Card.[15] As of February 2023, the report card tracked program participation, completion, and employment outcomes by race and ethnicity for 37 public and private Minnesota workforce development programs. The report card allows for uniform tracking and comparison of programs operating in the state to ensure that public and philanthropic funds are spent in an accountable way. For many programs, there are enough participants to report data in an intersectional way, by race and gender. The report card is built from the public workforce development system's case

management system and is mandated by law in Minnesota.[16] The Minnesota data can be used by the 37 programs in the report card to track and hold themselves accountable to their own racial equity goals and as a benchmark for organizations operating in the state's workforce development system that are not tracked. Delaware's current efforts to provide statewide data on racial equity in the workforce development system could be complemented with similar program-level reporting and accountability.

Chicago Jobs Council. The Chicago Jobs Council was established in 1982 to support workforce development programs in Chicago and advocate for policies in the state to generate economic mobility. Recently, the Chicago Jobs Council has launched an Anti-Racist Workforce Development Framework to coordinate action in the city around reimagining a workforce development system that advances racial equity.[17] They have worked with Young Invincibles and the steering committee of the Illinois Apprenticeship Collaborative to open more equitable career pathways in apprenticeship through broadened program on-ramps, pre-apprenticeship training, and wraparound support services. The council also advocates for removing barriers to employment, including clearing driver's license suspensions, reducing burdensome fines and fees, and making public transportation more affordable. To build capacity around these goals in the region, the council provides public trainings, customized trainings, and a workforce development professional learning cohort. The Chicago Jobs Council stands out as a regional convener that integrates capacity building in workforce development programs with equitable policy advocacy at the city and state levels.

Opportunities for Growing Industries

Every 2 years, the Delaware Department of Labor produces long-term industry and occupation forecasts for 10-year periods. The most recent projections, published in July 2022, cover the period 2020–2030 (Dougherty 2022). Delaware is projected to experience a net gain of 42,030 jobs in this period, for an average annual growth rate of 0.9 percent. Delaware's Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information produces and presents these estimates by occupational group, career cluster, and industry. The US Department of Education developed a list of 16 career clusters (the National Career Clusters Framework[18]) as a way to link school and work, thereby aiding students in choosing a course of study best suited to their career plans.

In table 12, we highlight the career clusters that are projected to meet or exceed the state average annual growth rate of 0.9 percent, including the average annual wage in 2020, the number of new jobs, and total openings projected during the 10-year period. The six clusters that exceed the state average

for annual growth rate are health sciences; human services; hospitality and tourism; architecture and construction; information technology; and transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Delaware Career Cluster Employment Projections

Career Cluster	Annual Job Growth Projection, 2020–2030	New Jobs Projected, 2020–2030	Total Openings Projected, 2020–2030	Average Annual Earnings, 2020
Health science	1.9%	11,321	61,567	$62,731
Human services	1.8%	2,357	16,814	$42,388
Hospitality and tourism	1.7%	9,669	105,558	$28,968
Architecture and construction	1.2%	3,678	33,331	$54,101
Information technology	1.1%	1,797	12,784	$99,677
Transportation, distribution, and logistics	1.0%	4,216	53,877	$39,606

Source: Dougherty, Thomas. 2022. Delaware 2030: Occupation and Industry Projections. Wilmington: Delaware Department of Labor Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information.

To provide a clearer sense of positions available in these fields, the following are the top three jobs that offer a living wage[19] in each career cluster based on annual openings:

- Health science

    » Registered nurses
    » Medical secretaries
    » Licensed practical and vocational nurses

- Human services

    » Child, family, and school social workers
    » Social and community service managers
    » Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors

- Hospitality and tourism

    » First-line food preparation supervisors and serving workers
    » First-line housekeeping supervisors and janitorial workers
    » Food service managers

- Architecture and construction

    » Construction laborers
    » Electricians

> » Carpenters (tied with first-line supervisors in construction trades and extraction workers)

- Information technology

  > » Software developers and software quality assurance analysts and testers
  > » Computer systems analysts
  > » Computer user support specialists

- Transportation, distribution, and logistics

  > » Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers
  > » Industrial truck and tractor operators
  > » Light truck and delivery service drivers

This list of career clusters and occupations is not exhaustive but provides examples of high-quality jobs that may be available to workforce development program participants. As noted throughout this report, the workforce system and its partners will need to ensure that program participants of color have access to high paying opportunities, including by removing barriers for training *and* addressing structural barriers to employment.

Possibilities for Funding

State workforce development systems are principally funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).[20] States receive annual allocations, determined by funding formulas, from the US Department of Labor. Each state then disburses their allotted funding to local workforce areas. Given the size and labor market interconnectedness of Delaware, the state operates as a single workforce area.

Other resources are available to support workforce development beyond WIOA funding streams, some with a particular focus on racial equity. In interviews with workforce development organizations, as well as supplemental research, the following sources of funding arose:

- **US Economic Development Administration.** Delaware received a statewide workforce planning grant through the American Rescue Plan Act.[21] The Economic Development Administration has also distributed workforce development funding through recent programs such as the Good Jobs Challenge.[22]

- **Community Bank Delaware.** One training organization we interviewed mentioned a long-term relationship they have with Community Delaware Bank, wherein they receive funding to provide workforce development services to the bank. This kind of arrangement is an example of how training organizations can partner directly with businesses to receive funding for the talent development services they provide.

- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation.** Wilmington has been selected to participate in the Generation Work initiative, which aims to improve employment outcomes for young adults of color from low-income families.[23] Each city participating in the initiative will foster changes in the workforce ecosystem that promote the hiring, retention, and advancement of people of color ages 18 to 29.

- **Delaware Blue Collar Jobs Development Act.** Blue Collar training grants are available to help Delaware businesses provide customized training programs to upskill or reskill their employees and deliver financial assistance to full-time employees.

In November 2022, the White House published *Advancing Equitable Workforce Development for Infrastructure Jobs: A Guide to Selected Federal Resources* (White House 2022), which provides an overview of selected federal funding resources available to support equitable workforce development and is intended for state, local, and tribal government entities, employers, unions, workforce development boards, economic development entities, industry associations, institutions of higher education (including community colleges), other training providers, community-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations.

All of these sources are supplemental funding opportunities that could expand Delaware's ability to build a workforce development system that results in racially equitable outcomes. Regardless of the source of funding, one organization interviewed raised an important point: due to the competitive nature of most funding opportunities and the scarcity mentality that surrounds them, workforce training organizations are more likely to compete than collaborate. To combat this, funders can require or encourage partnership in their awards. Federal funding programs, such as the Good Jobs Challenge, have followed this model. Making this common practice can result in innovation and better outcomes for communities most in need.

Recommendations and Conclusions

This study identified how Delaware workforce organizations and intermediaries are addressing racial equity. There is more that could be done to enhance participant outcomes and advance racial equity, including leveraging data, engaging in advocacy with policymakers and employers, and setting and tracking progress toward goals.

Leveraging Data

Most interview participants noted that their organizations use participant data on race and ethnicity in some way; typically, to determine the demographics of program participants. Fewer programs, however, use racial data to evaluate participant outcomes. Many interviewees noted challenges with Delaware's workforce data ecosystem.

The National Skills Coalition and Prosperity Now recommend that workforce development providers collect data and assess outcomes, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. This type of analysis helps organizations to determine if participants of various race and ethnicity groups are achieving equitable outcomes and, if not, to take steps to make changes and/or advocate for structural change. The state of Delaware also has an opportunity to help the workforce development system better collect and analyze data on who is served and whether there are differences in participation by race, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities such as immigration status, gender, and disability. Some organizations are already doing this work and others may need help with accessing data infrastructure and staffing to analyze data. Some organizations try to collect data on outcomes by surveying participants after program completion, but participation rates can be low. If the state makes wage data available by race and ethnicity, providers will be able to better understand how their programs are addressing equity. Delaware agencies and foundations could also deploy funding to help organizations with their data collection and analysis efforts. Delaware's current efforts to provide statewide data on racial equity in the workforce development system could be complemented by similar program-level efforts to improve reporting and accountability. Funders can also direct programmatic funding to organizations that have a track record of addressing equity internally (e.g., in staffing and leadership) and in participant recruitment, training, and placement efforts.

Engaging in Advocacy with Policymakers

Most of the interviewees did not engage in advocacy specifically regarding racial equity. In one instance, an interviewee noted concerns about their organization's nonprofit status and tax rules prohibiting advocacy. However, nonprofits can engage in advocacy. Organizations like the National Skills Coalition and Prosperity Now suggest that workforce development providers and intermediaries call for policies that address structural barriers participants face, such as discrimination in hiring, limited financial aid for education and training, and burdensome work requirements for public assistance.[24] Prosperity Now recommends collecting and using data and building partnerships with other entities to enhance advocacy efforts. DRJC already advocates for policies that can improve outcomes for Delawareans in areas such as criminal justice and youth development; it could serve as a vehicle for advocacy for other related issues.

Funders can participate in advocacy as well. The Families and Workers Fund, for example, is organized by three foundations that not only gave money to organizations but also advocated for changes to the unemployment insurance system during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leung 2021).

Engaging in Advocacy with Employers

Less than half the participating survey respondents said they actively cultivated relationships with employers that commit to racial equity in their hiring or to providing high-quality jobs. Workforce providers can continue target employers that offer "high road" employment with livable wages and benefits. Workforce development providers also can encourage employers to develop equity goals, learn about structural racism, and engage in advocacy to remove structural barriers (Langston, Scoggins, and Walsh 2020).

Setting and Tracking Progress toward Goals

If Delaware is to address racial equity in the workforce development system, stakeholders will need to identify goals and ensure that progress is measured. As the National Skills Coalition describes, "racial equity goals in postsecondary attainment and local workforce development plans help focus collective efforts on achieving racial equity instead of perpetuating disparities" (Johnson et al. 2019).

Workforce development program interviewees felt that the state workforce system should be more vocal about the importance of racial equity, including setting goals, being "intentional" and deliberate in taking actions to improve equity, and measuring progress toward the goals.

Individual programs can set goals for their programs and an appropriate entity could coordinate across the system to set goals for the workforce system overall. One model is the Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Department, which makes data on 37 programs available in a report card to hold the state accountable to its own racial equity goals and as a benchmark for organizations operating in the state's workforce development system that are not tracked. For Delaware, these objectives could incorporate community input, as interviewees recommended, to ensure that targets and activities reflect the needs of residents.

Conclusions

This report has provided an overview of career and technical education and workforce development opportunities in Delaware, summarized ways that workforce development organizations are addressing racial equity, and identified opportunities and strategies for overcoming barriers and reducing equity gaps.

The organizations that were interviewed serve a diverse group of residents of Delaware, including underemployed or unemployed individuals who may or may not live in underserved communities, participants of color, K–12 students, college students, postsecondary learners, and seniors ages 55 and older. Virtually all training organizations reported that they consider job quality in their efforts to place participants with employers, although the degree to which they do varies widely.

Delaware residents, particularly those of color, face many structural barriers to success in completing training programs and ultimately obtaining employment. Structural racism, as defined by the Aspen Institute (n.d.), is "a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity." In Delaware, workforce providers and intermediaries identified structural barriers including poor quality of K–12 education; lack of transportation access; lack of affordable, accessible child care; and lack of affordable and safe housing. Several organizations provide wraparound services to address some of these challenges, including stipends and assistance connecting participants to housing and other social services. However, interviewees shared that more is needed. In addition to structural barriers, participants of color face racial biases, including the perception that job seekers and trainees of color do not belong in certain spaces.

There has been an increased focus in Delaware on addressing racial equity. Most organizations interviewed collect demographic information about participants, including data on race and ethnicity, but how that information is used varies. Of the organizations that track outcomes by race and ethnicity, just one indicated that they did not find any statistical disparities. The rest, however, noted differences in outcomes for participants of color. All survey respondents indicated that they used at least one type of strategy to advance racial equity within their staffing and operational practices. The most common activity to ensure organizational racial equity was identifying the importance of racial equity in overall mission or strategy. In their survey responses, over half of respondents indicated that their organizations are involved in "advocating for local, state, or federal policies to improve job quality, benefits, or other issues," though this was less commonly reported in interviews, and concern about nonprofit status disallowing advocacy was identified as one reason for not engaging in advocacy.

The interviewees shared the following deficits in the workforce system: a lack of diversity in Delaware's workforce development systems; challenges with Delaware's workforce data ecosystem; insufficient goal setting and progress tracking related to participant outcomes and equity; and weaknesses in partnerships in Delaware, including between community organizations and employers and among workforce development organizations.

Interviewees shared several suggestions on how the state of Delaware can better address racial equity in the workforce system, including increasing diversity and inclusion by removing barriers to training and careers and addressing discrimination and ensuring funding for workforce programs is distributed equitably.

The literature on equity in workforce development and participant recommendations suggest four key recommendations for the Delaware workforce system: (1) improving data collection and infrastructure and leveraging it to more precisely measure outcomes and then acting on those findings; (2) engaging in advocacy with policymakers to address structural barriers, including hiring discrimination, limited financial aid for education and training, and burdensome work requirements for public assistance; (3) engaging in advocacy with employers to develop equity goals, learn about structural racism, and engage in advocacy to remove structural barriers; and (4) identifying goals related to racial equity and ensuring that progress is measured.

Appendix: Methodology

Survey

To supplement information on the matrix related to racial equity activities, the Urban team shared a survey with dozens of workforce providers. Researchers sent email reminders to workforce programs and UWDE also promoted the survey. Ultimately, 13 fully complete surveys were collected. The surveys took approximately 10 minutes to complete and covered the following areas: (1) communities served, including zip codes; (2) racial equity and program recruitment; (3) racial equity and participant retention; (4) racial equity and career pathways; (5) racial equity and job placement; (6) racial equity and internal practices of the organization; and (7) barriers to addressing racial equity.

Interviews

The researchers conducted in-depth, semistructured virtual interviews with 23 workforce development program representatives. Most participants worked for workforce programs. Other participants included a funder, the Workforce Development Board, and a workforce expert from Delaware. Interviewees were referred by UWDE staff. The interviews covered participants served, program activities, successes and challenges, practices to advance racial equity in their programs, and their perceptions on what Delaware's goals should be in building racial equity across the workforce system.

Notes

1 A list of other policy topics that workforce providers might address can be found in the report by Johnson and colleagues (2019).

2 We use the identifier *Hispanic or Latino* throughout this report. We acknowledge that this may not be the preferred identifier, and we remain committed to employing inclusive language whenever possible.

3 "Delaware's Promise Communities," United Way of Delaware, accessed November 1, 2022, https://uwde.org/what-we-do/our-communities/delaware-promise-communities/.

4 "Delaware Workforce Development Board Business Decision Makers Survey," Delaware Department of Labor, accessed November 1, 2022, https://laborfiles.delaware.gov/main/wdb/notices/Business%20Decision%20Makers%20Short%20Survey%20Results.pdf.

5 Nello M. Paoli Jr. and Michelle Taylor, "This Is How We Can Deliver for Delaware's High School Seniors," *Delaware Online*, February 2, 2023, Opinion, https://www.delawareonline.com/story/opinion/2023/02/02/delaware-high-school-seniors-new-initiative-paves-way-for-next-steps/69863198007/.

6 See "Racial Trauma," Mental Health America, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.mhanational.org/racial-trauma.

7 Researchers have demonstrated that Black-white racial wealth gaps persist even among higher-income Black households. See, for example, the report by Hicks and colleagues (2021).

8 Delaware 151st General Assembly, House Bill 205 (August 18, 2022), https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/78751.

9 See "Data Looks at Racial Diversity in Delaware Teach and School Leader Workforce," *Delaware News*, July 5, 2017, Department of Education News, https://news.delaware.gov/2017/07/05/data-shows-racial-diversity-delaware-teacher-school-leader-workforce/.

10 In 2022, the Workforce Development Board, with UWDE, committed to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Reinventing Our Communities Cohort Program, meant "to encourage strong local economies by helping communities across the US address structural racism and barriers to opportunity." "Reinventing Our Communities (ROC) Cohort Program," Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development/reinventing-our-communities-roc-cohort-program.

11 In 2022, UWDE and the DRJC began building the Equity Counts Data Center, a resource that "brings together several Delaware-specific data sources in one location that can be used to assess inequities at the state and ZIP code levels." "A Closer Look at the Equity Counts Data Center," United Way of Delaware, accessed November 1, 2022, https://uwde.org/drjc/equity-counts-launch/#:~:text=The%20Equity%20Counts%20Data%20Center%20brings%20together%20several%20Delaware%2Dspecific,state%20and%20ZIP%20code%20levels. Launched in partnership with Delaware Health and Social Services, the Department of Health, and tech partner Green River, the site aggregates data related to employment, poverty, education, criminal justice, and health. See "Equity Counts Data Center," Delaware Health and Social Services, accessed November 1, 2022, https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/portals/ecdc/locations/state.

12 Apprenticeship ratios are established by some states to govern the ratio of apprentices to journeypersons that can be hired in a particular industry, Apprenticeship ratios regulate the supply of new workers in an apprenticeable occupation, and ensure the health and safety of apprentices during training by ensuring an

adequate supply of mentors. Apprenticeship ratios are an important equity issue because they regulate access to apprenticeship slots and affect the quality of the apprenticeship training.

13 "What We Do," Humanim, accessed November 1, 2022, https://humanim.org/what-we-do/workforce-development/employment-services/.

14 "Who We Are," Humanim, accessed November 1, 2022, "https://humanim.org/who-we-are/#post-1787.

15 "Uniform Report Card," Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed November 1, 2022, https://mn.gov/deed/data/workforce-data/report-card/.

16 Workforce Program Outcomes, Minn. Stat. § 116L.98 (2012).

17 "Anti-Racist Workforce Development System Framework," Chicago Jobs Council, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.cjc.net/antiracist-framework.

18 State's Career Clusters Initiative. Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, accessed March 30, 2023, https://careertech.org/.

19 We used the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage Calculator and set the threshold at the calculated living wage for one adult with zero children in Delaware, which is $17.74 per hour (or $36,899 annually). "Living Wage Calculator for Delaware," MIT Living Wage Calculator, accessed December 7, 2022, https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/10.

20 "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act," US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa.

21 "American Rescue Plan: Partnering with America's Communities to Build Back Better," US Economic Development Administration, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/American-rescue-plan.

22 "Good Jobs Challenge: Getting Americans Back to Work," US Economic Development Administration, accessed November 1, 2022, https://www.eda.gov/arpa/good-jobs-challenge/.

23 "Four New Cities Join Generation Work," *Casey Connects* (blog), Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 18, 2022, https://www.aecf.org/blog/four-new-cities-join-generation-work.

24 A list of other policy topics that workforce providers might address can be found in the report by Johnson and colleagues (2019).

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