



Ideas and Action

From the Community,
For the Community

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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Dear Friends:

The past year has been full of challenges we never could have imagined. Like many organizations, the Jobs Council was forced to figure out a new way of working after the COVID-19 pandemic thrust us head first into remote work. The pandemic brought with it health and economic crises worse than many of us had seen in our lifetimes and shined a light on racial inequities resulting from white supremacy and longstanding structural racism embedded in policies. Research showed that Black and Brown workers, who were disproportionately represented as essential workers in healthcare, transportation, grocery stores and other frontline jobs, were dying at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts.

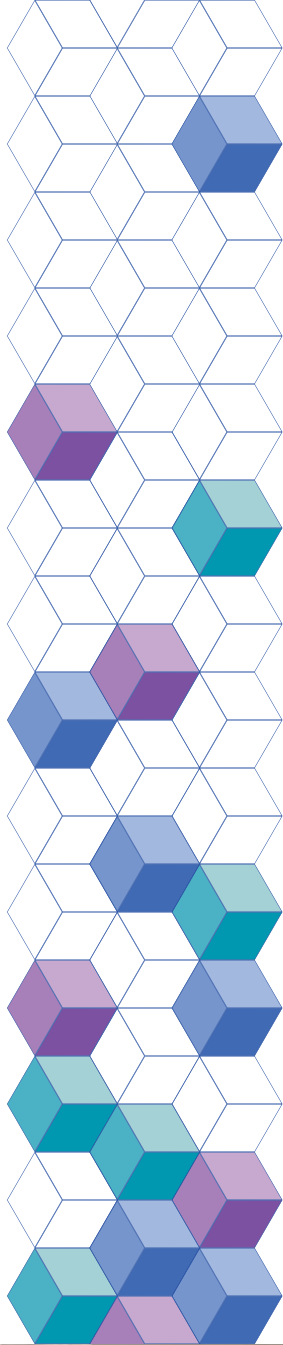


As we pivoted our programming to the virtual space in order to meet the rapid changes in the workforce development field caused by the pandemic, we were again filled with grief and sorrow as we witnessed the spectacular violence of white supremacy in the murders of Black people at the hands of the police. George Floyd, James Scurlock, Breonna Taylor: all names of people that should be alive today. White supremacy and racist violence have taken so much—especially from Black people, neighborhoods, and families. Some of us are traumatized by both the realities of violence, as well as the constant spectacle of Black death shared again and again online and on TV.

We know we don't have all the answers and we make mistakes, but stand firmly in stating that Black lives matter, that we are here for the difficult times, and that we don't plan on shying away from difficult conversations. We want an end to the spectacular violence we see in the news that takes life and health quickly. And we also strive to reverse the less obvious violence that happens slowly through neglect, silence, disinvestment, low wages, and many other subtle, powerful forces. We are committed to looking to and listening to the margins, and to dismantling the white supremacy that drives violence both slow and spectacular.

Sincerely,

Carrie Thomas
Executive Director



The Jobs Council Pivots During the Pandemic

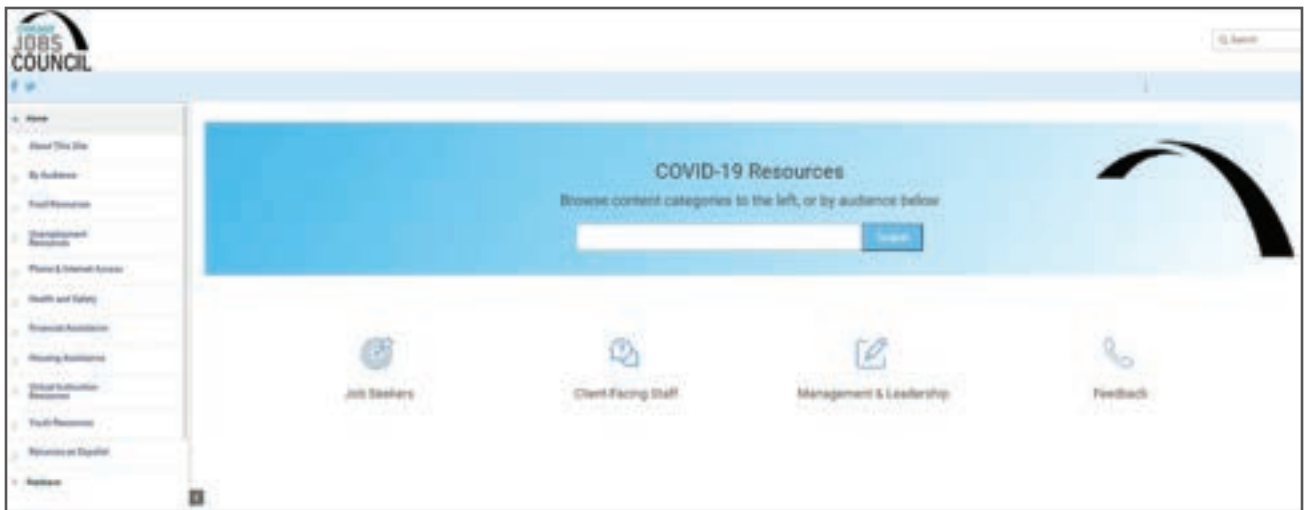
Although the first Covid-19 patient in the U.S. wasn't diagnosed until January 15, 2020, by the week of March 21, unemployment claims in Illinois had shot up 1400% compared to the previous year – and the Jobs Council had sprung into action.

In response to the pandemic, the federal government had declared a national emergency, expanded eligibility for unemployment benefits and provided a range of stimulus payments. But the system in Illinois was quickly overwhelmed, as thousands of newly unemployed workers struggled to determine their eligibility, file claims, and actually receive benefits.

The first thing we did was to go remote and begin providing all our information virtually to anyone who needed it. Going “remote” meant creating a Covid-19 online resource site – in English and Spanish – that offered detailed information on how to get assistance with food, unemployment benefits, phone and internet access, housing, financial aid, and resources for youth.

As concerns about COVID-19 resulted in stay-at-home orders across the nation, we went back to the drawing board to figure out how to transition our in person offerings to the virtual space. We organized our first virtual Workforce 360 webinars in April and May, which offered guidance to more than 100 participants on such essentials as Medicaid, student loans, ticketing and towing fines, utilities, and aid to nonprofits.





As we listened to the needs of the field during these sessions, we learned that we needed to bring services to jobseekers at their locations; offer coaching and trauma support for the newly jobless; protect access to SNAP benefits, especially when several Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) offices were closed; help the homeless access workforce services; and intensify efforts to increase racial equality in workforce development. The Frontline Focus team also used learnings from the listening sessions to identify priority training topics: mental health/trauma, leadership, and coaching. By June, we were running trainings focused on these key topics.

In continuing with our pivot to the virtual space, Frontline Focus leveraged the three remaining Workforce Professionals Credential trainings for the Class of 2020 to pilot and calibrate the optimal interactive virtual training experience for participants. The team also worked with two external facilitator partners to pilot more information-heavy sessions on remote coaching and trauma-informed care strategies. These pilots lead to the development of new training formats (Webinar, Virtual Training, and Intensives), which provide workforce professionals online training options with varying levels of interaction to suit their needs, time constraints, and level of interest.

The pandemic was an unprecedented challenge. By asking staff to review the relative importance of all our goals and outcomes, tracking progress on all projects, collaborating with our partners and members, and increasing our outreach to policymakers, we were able to rise and meet the challenge.



Capacity Building Updates

Lasting, systemic change in workforce development requires building increased capacity across a broad range of areas. This insight drove several capacity building projects focused on leadership skills, coaching, training, and career readiness.

Frontline Focus Training Institute (FFTl) welcomed the second Workforce Professionals Credential (WPC) cohort. The year-long intensive cohort leverages a first-of-its-kind competency model to address all the values and competencies an effective workforce professional should possess. As part of the cohort, 20 workforce professionals applied the learnings they received over the course of the 10-month training to a final capstone project. Cohort participants worked with four nonprofits to provide [pro-bono consulting on specific workforce challenges](#). These nonprofits provided everything from food service training and support for young mothers to adult literacy and support to Korean Americans and other recent immigrants seeking jobs. Recommendations from the cohort included improvements to recruitment and retention strategies, community organizing, and exit process, as well as advice on how to launch an employer advisory council.

The first cohort of the Jobs Council's Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy graduated in December 2019. Twenty-four system-level leaders, representing a range of local nonprofit organizations, business associations, community colleges and universities, and public agencies, completed a full year of leadership cohort retreats, training sessions, and collaborative projects delivered by the Jobs Council in partnership with Aspen

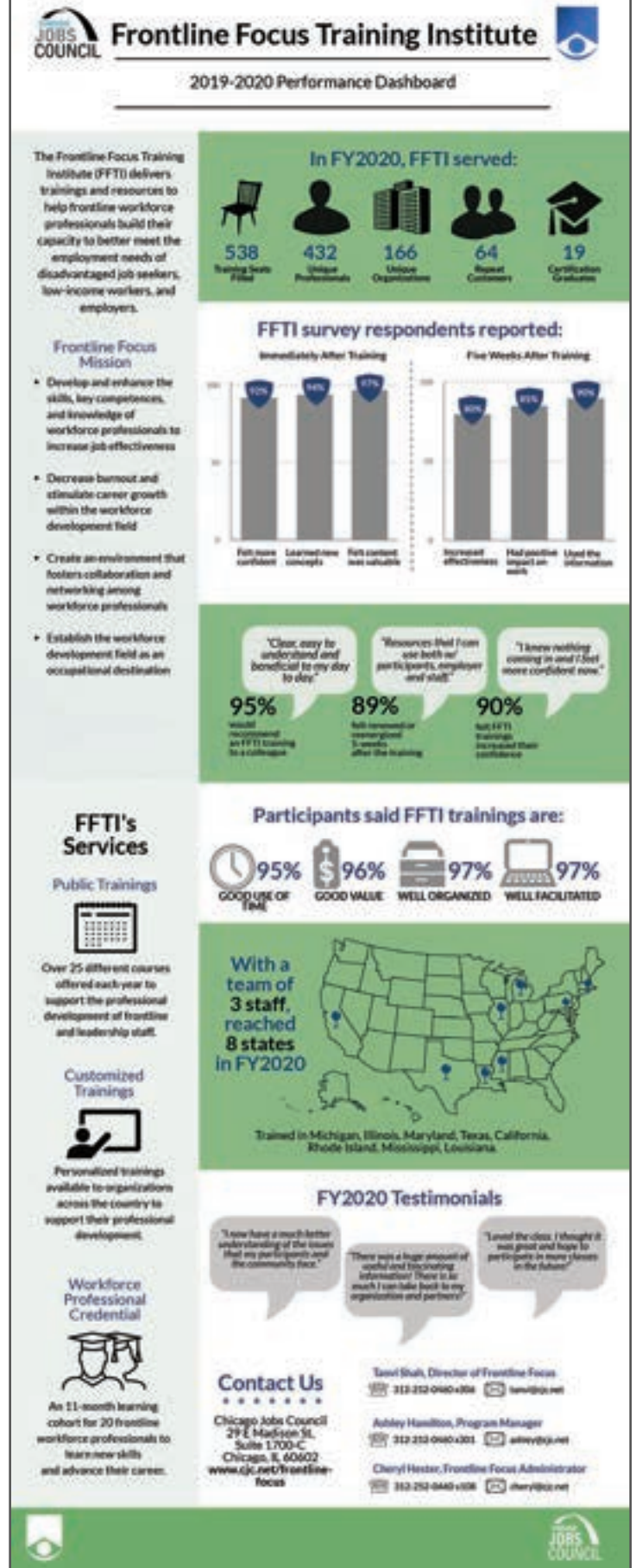


Institute and the Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance. The fellows continue to meet as alumni and the Jobs Council is moving some of the Academy's content online and seeking funding for a second cohort.

The Jobs Council completed three train-the-trainer sessions on Family-Centered Coaching in Illinois, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Working with The Prosperity Agenda, FFTI also integrated and expanded its services in Family-Centered Coaching to address racial inequities on a systems level by launching the Family-Centered Coaching for Racial Equity Project. This project uses a community-led design process to understand what's needed to transform systems, build power, and strengthen relationships among families experiencing poverty, coaches, and leaders of human service systems. The project was a collaboration among eight organizations in New Orleans and Mississippi to explore how Family-Centered Coaching can create systemic change and advance racial equity.

FFTI also assembled the first Chicago College and Career Advising Credential (CCCAC) cohort of 25 participants for two in-person sessions before switching to online delivery for the remainder of the eight-session program. CCCAC provided monthly peer learning opportunities, conducted a survey showing high demand for the program, and began recruiting trainers.

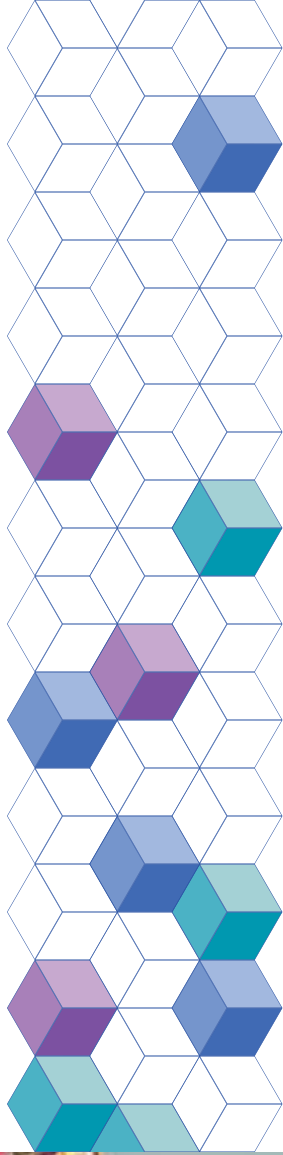
In response to the Covid -19 pandemic, our capacity building team transitioned all of FFTI's trainings and learning cohorts to a virtual format, offering its programs to



432 professionals from 166 organizations. The team launched a series of listening sessions and surveys, which revealed dramatically increased needs for virtual coaching and trauma-response practices. These findings were incorporated into a series of free and low-cost online trainings in trauma practices and virtual coaching strategies in June 2020.

Our capacity building team also led strategic conversations with on the ground practitioners and a national advisory committee of experts in order to develop a Career Readiness Framework and curriculum that uses both racial equity and trauma-informed practices. To develop the materials, the team evaluated and cataloged other job readiness curricula to identify key elements; tested components of the curriculum with Chicago Public School counselors; wrote a project report to document efforts to date; and, convened a working group of local workforce partners to jointly develop a readiness curriculum that incorporates the approach of the Career Readiness Framework.





Policy Advocacy Updates

This year the Jobs Council worked with a coalition of city, state, and national workforce development advocates to achieve major victories for unemployed workers in Illinois across a range of policy issues, including transportation, energy, apprenticeships, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

This work was needed: more than a million Illinois residents had filed for unemployment benefits in March and April, with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) as well as women particularly hard hit. Between March and September, Illinois lost low-wage jobs at eight times the rate of high-wage jobs — another blow to women, who hold most low-wage positions.

In response to these developments, the Jobs Council:

- Led a coalition to create talking points and recommendations to educate policymakers and prevent the passage of poor or siloed workforce development legislation;
- Persuaded more than 50 organizations to sign a letter to the Illinois Congressional Delegation calling for greater workforce investments and protections;





- Supported the Black Caucus agenda for racial equity during the Illinois legislature’s fall veto session; and,
- Endorsed the legislative testimony of four partners on post-secondary education and workforce development.

In response to the advocacy of the Transit Table Coalition and its allies, both the Chicago City Council and the Illinois legislature passed measures to end the practice of suspending driver’s licenses for failure to pay parking tickets, fines and other non-driving violations. It is estimated that 400 people lose their jobs each week due to these suspensions, creating a ripple effect that upends thousands of lives.

The new legislation won the support of a broad coalition of national and state nonprofits. The coalition also persuaded Chicago to offer a month-long, two-step program that will give residents the opportunity to purchase a City Sticker with no late fees or back charges, and will then offer an opportunity for those in compliance to have their City Sticker tickets forgiven at a later date.

The Jobs Council also played a pivotal role in the workforce policy deliberations of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition and the Governor’s Working Groups on Clean Energy to ensure that the state’s Clean Energy Jobs Acts provides on ramps for “green jobs”; decreases disparities for women as well as BIPOC communities; and leverages the best parts of local workforce ecosystems.

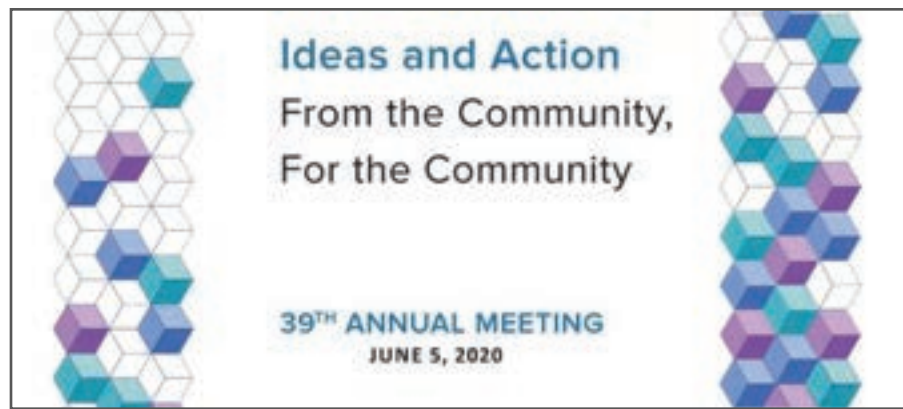
The Jobs Council partnered with Young Invincibles (YI), a national nonprofit organization committed to elevating the voices of young adults in the political process, and expanding economic opportunity for 18-34 year-olds, to explore strategies for increasing and sustaining

successful apprenticeships. Apprenticeships allow jobseekers to receive immediate income as well as paid, debt-free job training, while also providing a promising remedy for longstanding labor imbalances, especially among people of color and women. As a result of a series of statewide apprenticeship workshops held by the Jobs Council and YI in 2019, both organizations began work on an apprenticeship report that provided a summary of learnings and a series of recommendations that state leaders could make to help support organizations that currently or could potentially provide partnership opportunities to entities (or organizations and employers) launching apprenticeship programs.

Throughout the year, high unemployment increased the importance of SNAP benefits. The Jobs Council collaborated with other organizations to hold four virtual meetings for service providers and advocates. During these meetings we communicated the changes in eligibility requirements — including the loss of the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents waiver — and gathered feedback about issues communities were encountering in trying to access SNAP — a serious issue as COVID led to the closure of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) offices in the midst of unprecedented food insecurity.

The Jobs Council joined a working group to make SNAP E&T a voluntary program; participated in a pilot for an improved SNAP referral system; made funding voluntary; and convened two working group meetings to develop a more holistic SNAP screening tool. Finally, the Jobs Council persuaded IDHS to create a fund for job seekers with SNAP or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits who are facing emergency housing needs or employment barriers.





39th Annual Meeting

More than 170 advocates, service providers, public agency partners and others gathered June 5, 2020, for *Ideas and Action — from the Community, for the Community*, [the 39th Annual Meeting of the Chicago Jobs Council](#). This first virtual annual meeting took place during the layered crises of economic instability, a global pandemic, intensifying climate change, and ongoing violence against people of color, particularly Black people. We explored these themes in the meeting’s opening [video](#), presentation of our two annual awards, and during our [panel discussion](#).

Given these layered crises, the Jobs Council decided to donate the full \$4,000 in ticket sales to four Black-led Chicago organizations pushing for police accountability and reform: [My Block, My Hood, My City](#); [Brave Space Alliance](#); the [Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression](#); and [Chicago Cross Neighborhood Solidarity](#).

Attendees also learned that today’s “layered crises” mean that 13 percent of Illinois residents live in poverty, another 23 percent are working but don’t earn enough to cover basic needs, and 65 percent of Black and Latinx Chicagoans are living on the financial edge, where just three months without income would push them below the poverty line. Despite these grim numbers, 40 percent of Chicago’s budget is allocated to law enforcement and federal investment in workforce development has declined 30 percent over the last 20 years.

It’s within this challenging context that the Jobs Council has attracted almost 1,000 participants to its workforce development

trainings and other events, and achieved some impressive policy victories, including passage of the Illinois License to Work Act, which eliminated more than 75,000 driver’s license suspensions in the state. (See Article IV: Policy Advocacy Updates.) As Bethany Atkins, a job coach supporting recent immigrants and 2020 Workforce Professionals Credential graduate remarked after a visit with policymakers in Washington, DC, “There is a really strong need for people who are working in roles like mine — very directly with programs and with clients — to communicate regularly and often with the people we have elected in our districts.”

The Jobs Council honored two such people during the annual meeting. Manny Rodriguez, executive director of [Revolution Workshop](#), received the [Betty J. Willhoite Award](#) for his work in leading a nonprofit that provides construction and woodworking workforce development for unemployed people in partnership with local businesses. [Alison Dickson](#), a 2019 fellow of the Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy and instructor and researcher at the University of Illinois School of Labor and Employment Relations, [received the Field Builder Award](#) for her work to strengthen capacity building and workforce development through education, including the development of a growing “train the trainers” movement focused on job quality and workers’ rights.

FISCAL YEAR 2020 FINANCIALS

Chicago Jobs Council Statement of Financial Position
Period ending June 30, 2020

ASSETS

Current Assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,088,459
Contributions receivable	638,350
Other receivables	18,246
Prepaid expenses	7,291
Certificate of deposit	52,126
Total Current Assets	\$1,804,472

Property and equipment	6,997
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TOTAL ASSETS **\$ 1,811,469**

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 59,137
Accrued payroll and related expenses	30,786
Loans payable	8,080
PPP loan payable	4,537
Deferred revenue	11,950
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 114,490

Net Assets:

Without donor restrictions	\$ 510,683
With donor restrictions – purpose restricted	\$1,186,296
Total Net Assets	\$1,696,979

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS **\$ 1,811,469**

FY2020 FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND DONORS

CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

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The Crown Family
Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance
Grand Victoria Foundation
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Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
Polk Bros. Foundation
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Unity Fund at the Chicago Community Trust
William G. McGowan Charitable Fund
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W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Anonymous

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Illinois Power Agency
Illinois Environmental Education Fund
National Center on Employment and
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National Skills Coalition
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Christina Warden
Taft West
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Megan Winzeler
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Teresa Zhu

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Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc.
Austin Coming Together
Boys and Girls Club Chicago
Breakthrough Urban Ministries
Cara
Career Transitions Center of Chicago
Centers for New Horizons
Central States SER
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Center for Arts & Technology
Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
Chicago Federation of Labor Workers Assistance Committee
Chicago House and Social Service Agency
Chicago Lights Urban Farm
Chinese American Service League
City of Chicago
City of Evanston Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services
DuPage County Workforce Development Division
Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc.
Employment and Employer Services
Equus Workforce Solutions
Erie Neighborhood House
Fathers, Families In Transition
Gads Hill Center
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Greater West Town Training Partnership
Growing Home, Inc.
Hana Center Chicago
Housing Opportunities for Women
Howard Area Community Center
Illinois Youth Build Coalition
Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago
Inner Voice, Inc.
Inspiration Corporation
Jane Addams Resource Corporation
JVS Career and Employment/JCFS Chicago
KRA-Westside American Job Center
LeadersUp
Man-Tra-Con Corporation
Marillac Social Center
Moraine Valley Community College
National Able Network, Inc.
Neighborhood House
North Lawndale Employment Network
Northwest Side Housing Center
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Pui Tak Center
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Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Skills for Chicagoland's Future
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St. Joseph Services - Humboldt Park
St. Leonard's Ministries
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
University of Illinois at Chicago, Center for Literacy MC147
University of Illinois at Chicago-UIC Career Services
World Relief DuPage/Aurora
WRD Environmental, Inc.
Youth Guidance
Youth Job Center
YouthBuild Rockford
YWCA Evanston/North Shore
YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Melissa Frazin
David Miller

Patrick O'Connor
Ivette Sosias



ABOUT CHICAGO JOBS COUNCIL

Chicago Jobs Council (Jobs Council) moves people out of poverty through employment using on-the-ground expertise, advocacy, and capacity-building. Our vision is that all people, regardless of where they start or where they've been, can access employment as a pathway out of poverty.

Founded in 1981 with 18 original members, the Jobs Council now works alongside nearly 100 members and many more partners to change policy, develop innovative practice, reform systems, strengthen organizations, and support frontline workforce development professionals.



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