



35 out of every 100  
Central Iowans  
Live in Poverty

# Central Iowa Opportunity Community Plan

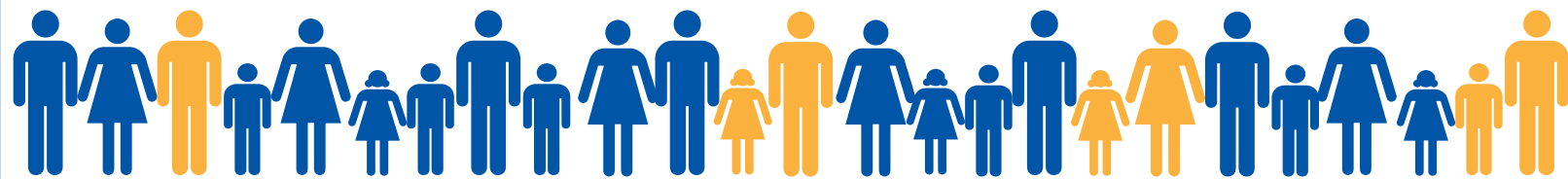
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Opportunity  
CREATING PROSPERITY FOR ALL

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# Our Journey.



In Pursuit of Opportunity and Prosperity for All

*The promise of the American Dream is that anyone, regardless of his or her origins, can have a fair start in life. If we work hard, we can get a good education and achieve success. But over the last several decades a disturbing “opportunity gap” has unexpectedly emerged between kids (and families) from “have” and “have-not” backgrounds. The central tenet of the American Dream—that all children, regardless of their family and social background, should have a decent chance to improve their lot in life—is no longer “self-evident.”*

*From: “Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis” by Robert D. Putnam, 2015*

## Background

In June 2014, over 100 community members came together to learn about the great attributes and challenges of our community and the concerns people have about poverty in central Iowa. The group represented four sectors in equal numbers: business leaders and philanthropists, government and school leaders, non-profit and faith leaders, and community members who have lived with the stresses of poverty. The lived-experience group included single parents, low-wage and low-skilled workers, immigrants and refugees, young people and those burdened with too much debt. They provided tangible and real-life accounts of the struggles of living in poverty. This was just the beginning of a journey that has brought us to the development of a community plan. A second OpportUNITY Summit brought together community members to review, revise and commit to the plan. The overarching message of the plan is that, if we work together, we CAN put the plan into action and bring prosperity to all.

## Some of the foundation-building efforts started with the first summit

Individuals who attended the 2014 Summit provided the following guidance:

- No one decides to live in poverty.
- We need jobs that pay livable wages.
- There is no such thing as poverty; there are just 100 different reasons why people are poor.
- We need to develop a plan and sustain action, not just be well-meaning people talking about it.
- There is no silver bullet; if there was, we would have ended poverty a long time ago.
- It will take lots of different changes, big and small, to decrease poverty.

Following the June 2015 Summit, the Leadership Round-table met every other week. The 14-member team was made up of interested individuals representing the four sectors. The work of the group included: building a membership database, sharing and celebrating quick wins and inspired efforts in the community, informing the membership throughout the process through newsletters and presentations, creating an OpportUNITY website and building momentum as we moved toward developing a community plan. During that time, close to 1,000 individuals signed on to support OpportUNITY from all walks of life and from all corners of our community.

## MYTH

Poor people are lazy.

## TRUTH

In 2004, there was at least one adult with a job in 60% of families on food stamps that had both kids and a nondisabled, working-age adult.  
(For All Myths and Truths: [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com))

As the Leadership Roundtable met to learn and plan, it became clear that more information was needed to understand the life of poverty. We invited community organizations working to reduce poverty to meet with us to share their insights and initiatives. In addition, a group of 46 community members representing the four sectors engaged over 184 individuals in 22 group and 31 individual Listening and Learning Sessions to learn and understand:

- The characteristics of the life that people living in poverty want to create.
- What is helping them to create that life?
- What is getting in the way of creating that life?
- What would most help people, to get out of poverty?

To affirm that the plan draft accurately reflected the needs and opportunities in our community, a second Summit took place on November 2-3, 2015. The purpose of the second Summit was to bring together community members to review, revise and commit to the plan.

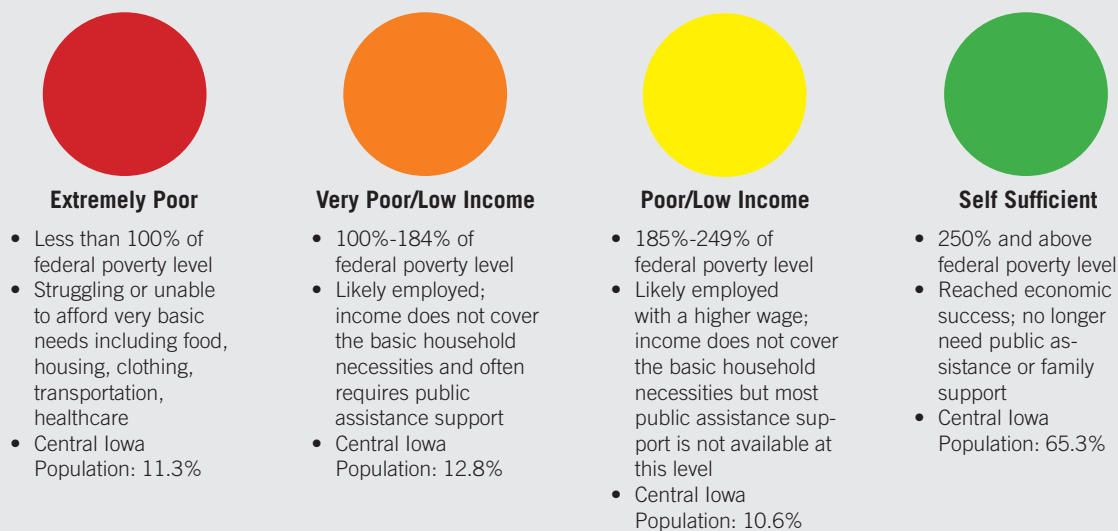
Over 120 interested citizens representing the same four sectors came together, and the voices of the community members were heard; numerous suggestions were offered and extensive revisions took place. Participants from both Summits were invited to attend Work Group meetings for each priority in the plan to review the revisions and provide additional input about the action steps for each performance measure. Eight meetings took place, and comments and suggestions were integrated into the priorities. A further review took place at a Leadership Roundtable meeting, and the final plan was prepared to reflect the work most crucial to accomplish in the next 18 months. The final plan includes priorities identified as those to work on over the next 18 months. Full lists of other ideas to work on in the future to reduce poverty are available for review on the website.

**We proudly present the OpportUNITY plan for poverty reduction in central Iowa. Now, the real and exciting work begins!**

**Extremely poor, very poor, poor/low-income** and **self-sufficient** are terms used in this plan and in discussions about moving out of poverty toward prosperity. Whenever data points are included in this plan, we identify the percentage of poverty on which they are based. The chart to the right indicates the levels of poverty. When the term poverty is used in this plan, it refers to the extremely poor, very poor and poor: 34.7% of central Iowans. In 2016, 250% of the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four is \$60,750. For a single person, it's \$29,700.

*The data on the cover is based on 250% of poverty.*

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEVELS OF POVERTY



Source: Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines (2016)



Learn more about OpportUNITY on our website:  
[www.unitedwaydm.org/opportunity](http://www.unitedwaydm.org/opportunity)



# A Community of Opportunity.



Central Iowa is a Place of Opportunity and Collaboration

## Central Iowa is an incredible place for opportunity!

There are many reasons to boast about our community, including the growing construction of stores and apartments in the downtown and East Village areas, a nightlife that is attracting young professionals after hours, a community voluntarily agreeing to distribute affordable housing throughout their city, a strong refugee steering committee addressing the needs of our newest neighbors and a revitalization of neighborhoods that have been in distress for too long.

## Central Iowa is a place of innovation!

As Norman Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the World Food Prize, said: "Civilization as it is known today could not have evolved, nor can it survive, without an adequate food supply." Iowa feeds the world and central Iowa is at the heart of these efforts. This is evidenced by the development of a robotic grocery store and a world-class agricultural sector that has nurtured a diverse, high-tech economy. In addition, we can boast about a continuously improved bike trail system, establishment of the Office of Economic Development and Industrial Relations to connect resources, and companies focusing on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to ensure future talent, centralized intake for homelessness, a beautiful Sculpture Garden and so much more.

## Central Iowa is a place of caring and collaboration!

Since the 2014 OpportUNITY Summit, individuals have taken their part in seriously reducing poverty and demonstrated their commitment in meaningful ways. One example is that a local business owner returned to work the next day after participating in the Summit and gave a long-term,

low-wage employee a substantial raise. Another participant accepted the challenge and wrote an editorial for the Des Moines Register, making a difference by using her skills and work platform. A member of the Leadership Roundtable connected with a participant and has committed to being her mentor after she graduates from college. These are just a few examples of our caring community.

## Our Community is a Great Place to Live

*Over the last year, central Iowa has been applauded for a variety of reasons. Central Iowa has been recognized in new ways for being a great place to live and work. Awards include:*

1. #1 Location for millennial home buyers (10-15, Realtor.com)
2. #4 Best City for Tech Workers to Start Their Career (6-12-15, Computer Training Schools)
3. #5 Best City for Retirement (6-1-15, Bankrate)
4. Des Moines Leads U.S. Metro Areas in Community Pride (5-13-15, Gallup and Healthways 2014 survey)
5. #6 Midsize Metro Where College Grads Move for Jobs (5-12-15, American Institute for Economic Research)
6. #2 Best City to Find a Job (3-15-15, Wallethub)
7. #2 Best Farmers' Market in America (11-19-14, The Daily Meal)
8. #1 Up and Coming City for Food (9-17-14, Women's Health and Yelp)
9. Des Moines - Best City for Young Professionals (8-18-14, Forbes)
10. #1 Up and Coming Downtown (7-21-14, Fortune)
11. #4 America's Most LGBT-Friendly Cities (6-11-14, Vocativ)
12. Des Moines is the 11th best place to live in the United States (3-3-16, U.S. News and World Report)

## Central Iowa: A Great Place to Live and Work

1. Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and Des Moines Community Playhouse renovated.
2. Facebook recently opened a \$300 million, 476,000-square-foot data center in Greater Des Moines. Construction on a second data center is underway.
3. Drake University has plans to invest \$65 million to create a STEM complex on its Des Moines campus.
4. Kum & Go has plans to build a 120,000-square-foot, \$92 million office in Downtown Des Moines.
5. Microsoft is building a \$1.1 billion data center in West Des Moines. This will be the second data center that Microsoft has built in the city.
6. Wells Fargo Arena in Downtown Des Moines hosted the first and second rounds of the 2016 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. This represents a continued push for the city to host major college sports events and conferences.
7. A Hy-Vee grocery store is under construction in downtown Des Moines.
8. Accumold, a global leader in the design, development and production of micro-engineered parts for various high-tech industries, has broken ground on its second expansion in four years in Ankeny.
9. Cultivation Corridor is providing messaging to highlight more than 20 agribusiness, agbioscience and agtechnology projects representing more than \$1.83 billion in central Iowa activity.
10. The Des Moines - West Des Moines metropolitan statistical area (MSA) totaled a record \$1.4 billion in goods exports in 2014.
11. The Homeless Coordinating Council and Continuum of Care will oversee the use of current funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
12. 2-1-1 is available 24/7 to provide information and referrals to callers seeking help.
13. FamilyWise, available to central Iowans, provides discounts and savings on medications.
14. HOPE Initiative, a United Way of Central Iowa demonstration project, works with four local agencies to provide intense case management and financial support to remove barriers for 35 single-parent families through a multigenerational approach.
15. Healthy Homes Des Moines is a collaborative effort to minimize clinic and hospital visits related to pediatric asthma.
16. On behalf of the greater community, United Way, in partnership with the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation and the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, solicited the services of the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC), to study behavioral health services in central Iowa. A report has been released.

## We have work to do, and we can do it together!

We know that we have many reasons to be proud of central Iowa! We know that there is work to be done to make this a community where all our neighbors can live with-out want and need. We have work to be done to achieve this goal! We CAN do this together through collective impact! Collective impact is the commitment of a group of community members from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Thank you for joining this journey! (See pages 38 and 39)

## The number of people living in poverty in central Iowa needs to decrease!


2015 indicates that approximately 192,000 central Iowans (34% of the total population of Polk, Dallas and Warren counties) do not earn enough to be self-sufficient and 62,471 live below 100% of poverty. For a family of four, living below 100% of poverty means you earn less than \$24,300 annually. In order to be self-sufficient, a family of four needs to earn \$60,750 annually. Of those living below 100% of poverty, 22,285 are children under 18 years old. **The overall goal of OpportUNITY is to increase the percentage of people who are financially self-sufficient from 64.7% in 2013 to 75% in 2020.** (American Community Survey Poverty Thresholds, (ACS), 2013)

## System Changes in Central Iowa:



- Streamlined access to general assistance
- Refugee Steering Committee established a community plan and evolved into the Refugee Alliance, hiring a full-time coordinator of refugee initiatives
- Mental Health Center located at Central Iowa Shelter and Services
- Hunger Free Polk County and Hunger Free Dallas County established and operational
- Centralized Intake for Homelessness has been created and is operational as the intake and prioritization system now housed at Primary Health Care
- City of Des Moines and Polk County have hired a Polk County Continuum of Care Board Director to oversee HUD funding
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) education and training launched
- Connections Matter partnership formed, developed a shared message about brain development and trauma and offered workshops for grassroots efforts

## What do we know about poverty in central Iowa?

The most recent poverty data informs us that many of our central Iowa neighbors are not living the quality of life we all seek. Individuals and families in this circumstance are often hungry, homeless, living in poor conditions or unsafe housing, not educated or working and often hopeless. The county-level poverty data released on October 23, 2015 informs us that there is significant work still to be done to help central Iowans move to sustainable self-sufficiency. The following data points tell the story. These data points refer to 100%  of poverty and below.

- Since 2011, the percentage of central Iowans living below the 100% federal poverty level has increased from 9.8% to 11.3 %. The state percentage for 2014 is 12.6 %.
- With over 22% of people who have less than a high school diploma living below 100% of poverty in central Iowa, individuals without a high school diploma or equivalency may only be eligible for low-wage jobs. Some minimum-wage jobs require at least an equivalency diploma.
- More females (12.4 %) are living in poverty than males (10.3 %).
- In Polk County, 22.7% of families in poverty are led by single fathers; 34.8% are led by single mothers.
- In Polk County, the percentages of African Americans (36 %), Hispanics (25.5 %) and people of two or more races (29.2 %) living in poverty indicate disproportionate numbers when compared with the white population (9.8 %).

## Why should we strive to end poverty in central Iowa?

The future of a community depends on the well-being and success of children, adults and families. The following are some reasons why ending poverty is critical in central Iowa:

### For our children...

- Low-income children from birth to age five are twice as likely as affluent children to be obese (Currie, 2005).
- By age four, research shows that low-income children have heard 30 million fewer words than their affluent peers (Hart & Risley, 2003).
- Low-income children have less access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality early care and learning opportunities (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2014).
- Children eligible for free and reduced-price lunch are 30% more likely to be chronically absent in fourth grade and 40% more likely to be absent in eighth grade. This affects their academic performance (Ginsberg, Jordan & Chang, 2014).
- Nationally, only 15% of children who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year have access to those meals during the summer (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2014).



**Meet Keisha:** Keisha was homeless and jobless, but she is now employed and has found safe, affordable housing for her family of 5. “My parents taught me that ‘you can’t help someone who doesn’t want to help themselves.’ According to the government and their aid, my parents were wrong. I do nothing, they provide everything. I do something, they provide nothing, despite the fact that “something” just doesn’t cover everything.”



**Meet Rachel:** Rachel is a young single mother who started working full-time to support her family. “My food stamps declined from \$400-\$600 per month to \$120 per month after I began working full-time, but I was not making a living wage. I am no longer receiving Family Investment Program (FIP Benefits), because I timed-out and have completed the hardship extension. This affects my life, because I have to spend more money on necessities than I did, and my total income has not risen enough to sustain my family.”



**Meet Joe:** “I work at a fast-food restaurant while I am trying to support my family, and I am going to classes to get my high school diploma. My salary of \$10 per hour does not cover our needs. I will have to find a second job, but then I will probably have to quit school.”

### For adults and families...

- In addition to reducing poverty for the family, an increase in the number of adults with high school equivalency diplomas, industry-recognized credentials and the benefit of soft skill training can increase the skill of the workforce to meet the needs of the community's employers.
- The state's skills gap persists with only 32% of working Iowans having the skills and credentials needed to work in the middle skill jobs that make up 55% of Iowa's jobs. (Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition, 2016).
- High school dropouts are more likely than those who graduate to be arrested or have a child while still a teenager, which both incur additional financial and social costs (Fiester 2010).
- Iowa's average earnings for private-sector workers are 23% below the national average (Future Ready Iowa, 2015).
- Des Moines, Iowa has been named one of the "Worst Cities for Black Americans" focusing on the gap in quality of life compared to whites (24/7 Wall St., 2015).

## MYTH

Single moms are the problem.

## TRUTH

Only 9% of low-income, urban moms have been single throughout their child's first five years. 35% were married to or in a relationship with the child's father for that entire time.

## POVERTY: BY THE NUMBERS

The number of homeless people who received services as of Jan. 2015.

830

1,335

Children (22.7%) who read below third-grade level (IDE, 2015)

Individuals (12.6%) who are food insecure (Map the Meal Gap, 2013)

54,080

1,453

Children (22.1%) who read below eighth-grade level (IDE, 2015)

Percent of individuals who are financially insecure (below 250% poverty threshold) (ACS)

34.7%

33,966

Central Iowans (8.1%) ages 18+ who do not have a high school diploma; 17.6% of these individuals live below 100% poverty (ACS)

Children (39.5%) who are on free or reduced lunch in Polk, Dallas and Warren county school districts (IDE, 2015-2016)

39,643

16.1%

Percentage of children who live below the poverty level in Iowa (ACS)

Des Moines Public School students (73.2%) who are on free or reduced lunch (IDE)

22,959

22,648

Individuals (7.2%) in the total central Iowa labor force who live below poverty; 2,564 (22.6%) of these individuals live in the Urban Core (ACS)

ACS — American Community Survey  
IDE — Iowa Dept. of Education

# The Game Plan.



## How We'll Tackle Poverty as a Team

*"The opposite of poverty is not wealth;  
the opposite of poverty is justice."*

— Bryan Stevenson

## Introduction

Four priority areas have evolved from the OpportUNITY work since June 2014. Initially, there was a longer list of potential focus areas, but these four priorities were selected for the following reasons:

- We believe these are the keys to reducing poverty in central Iowa.
- We believe we can work together to tackle these community challenges and that we can have an impact.
- They align with the work of other partners in our community and will allow us to leverage data, results and resources.
- These priorities were mentioned often during Listening and Learning conversations with people living in poverty.
- They connect to the broader community goals for education, income and health: Increase the percentage of central Iowa students who graduate from high school, increase the percentage of central Iowans who are financially self-sufficient and increase the Well-Being Index score.

Following the work group meetings for each topic and final reviews, the following priorities were identified as the work to do over the next 18 months. Additional ideas for ways to reduce poverty in the future are listed on the website.

## How each priority is formatted

Each of the priorities begins with an introduction to the connections between the topic and poverty in our community. Performance measures and action steps are numbered to make it easier to follow the flow of each priority. Related advocacy work is connected to an action step.

## Priority Areas: A Road Map for Our Work

This community plan is designed to inform, inspire and encourage action to help central Iowans move out of poverty. The plan focuses on four priority areas and includes performance measures and proposed action steps for each.



### 1. Education

- **Early Childhood — Grade 12:** Support investments in education and literacy efforts; increase access for children to educational opportunities and parental engagement in their child's education; and increase out-of-school academic opportunities.
- **Adult Education and Employment Readiness:** Increase access and opportunities for adults in all demographic groups to earn a high school or equivalency diploma and engage in post-secondary education or job training.



### 2. Transportation, Homelessness & Housing

Provide easy access to low-cost transportation so central Iowans can get to work and school, secure more low-income, affordable housing and reduce homelessness.



### 3. Change: Individual, Place-Based and System Change (New Iowans, Cliff Effect)

Encourage individuals to get to know and appreciate neighbors and other community members; develop an equitable approach to address poverty based upon need as determined by ZIP code; address policy issues such as the cliff effect and support refugees and immigrants coming to live and work in Iowa.



### 4. Food Insecurity

In food-insecure households, access to food is limited by a lack of money or other resources. For families to thrive in our community, healthy and nutritious food needs to be accessible and affordable.





## PRIORITY AREA:

# Education: Early Childhood through Grade 12

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*  
- **Nelson Mandela**

Poverty is very complex with many factors. Education is a long-term strategy and the greatest, evidence-based factor leading to sustainable self-sufficiency. For increased clarity and direction, this priority is divided into two sections: Early Childhood through Grade 12 and Adult Education and Employment Readiness.

## Early Childhood through Grade 12

The 2000 days between birth and the first day of kindergarten can have a profound and lifelong impact on physical and emotional wellbeing, readiness to learn and succeed and the ability to become a productive employee and citizen. With every second, a young child’s brains develops 700 synapses—neural connections that support learning and skills. By age 3, a child’s brain has reached more than 85 percent of its adult weight. This early brain development lays the foundation for academic skills and behavior traits that will last a lifetime.

Likewise, barriers to children’s educational achievement start early, and academic achievement gaps continue to grow without intervention. Many low-income children arrive at school already behind in communication and language, a disadvantage that only persists over time. At 18 months of age, word learning is significantly affected by economic background. On average, economically advantaged 3-year-olds know 1,100 words, while economically disadvantaged children know 500.

Our most disadvantaged children face increased challenges once they enter school. Children who do not get a good start can arrive in kindergarten already 18 months behind in literacy skills. Children who aren’t prepared to succeed in kindergarten are half as likely to read proficiently by third grade. Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are four times as likely to drop out of high school. The achievement gap already in place when many children enter kindergarten has dire consequences, not only for the individual child but for the entire community. The positive news is that the right thing to do for individual children is also the smart investment to make for our community.

## Adult Education and Employment Readiness

An adult’s education level is relevant to their ability to move into a sustainable career pathway, obtain living-wage employment and progress toward long-term financial self-sufficiency. An adult’s lifetime earnings can increase by more than \$700,000 with the attainment of at least a high school equivalency diploma and by even more with the addition of some post-secondary training. Increasing the fundamental employment-ready skills, and the number of industry-recognized credentials awarded, can boost the skill level of the workforce to meet the needs of the community’s employers and ultimately grow our economy. It is essential for our community to build an infrastructure of access and supportive services so that individuals can navigate their way to meaningful employment through an education and employment-readiness pathway.

Education on any level, early childhood through post-secondary, brings benefits to the individual, family and community. Education includes job-readiness training for individuals of all skill and income levels; educational attainment of single parents, minorities and economically disadvantaged individuals of all ages; and opportunities to earn a high school equivalency diploma, post-secondary credential, trade, internship, high school graduation or apprenticeship. In order for all to prosper, we must place an intentional focus on adult educational access, career-ready skills and supportive services for those with barriers to success. Without a skilled workforce, our economy will begin to atrophy. Without the Opportunity for individuals to gain skills for good jobs, we risk continued poverty across our community.



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURES



ACTION  
STEPS



ADVOCACY  
EFFORTS

# & Adult Education and Employment Readiness

## Performance Measures & Action Steps

1

### Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of low income 4-year-old children enrolled in Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) from 29% (2015-16) to 35% by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Encourage districts to put recruitment plans in place that support the enrollment of low-income children and children learning English in SWVPP. Encourage districts to reach out to these populations before the start of online registration. Encourage districts to hold spots for low-income and English Language Learners.



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Identify ways to provide free, high-quality preschool to low-income students.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Advocate to allow flexible use of Iowa Dept. of Education funding for SWVPP in 2016 SF2296 for Preschool expansion. (State Legislature Advocacy)



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Advocate for funding for full time preschool; the state funds 10 hours/week. Policymakers are not aware of the serious impact on families. (State Legislature Advocacy)

2

### Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of Kindergarten children proficient in literacy skills from 56% (2014-2015 school year) to 75% by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
2A

Partner with public libraries in all communities to support reading programs.



ACTION  
STEP  
2B

Partner with central Iowa hospitals and other service providers to develop and implement a literacy campaign for 4-week, 8-week and 16-week healthy baby appointments.



# EDUCATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH GRADE 12 & ADULT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT READINESS

## 3

### Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase 3rd grade reading proficiency in central Iowa school districts from 77% (2014-15) to 90% by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
3A

Support and expand access to quality out-of-school time programming, including robust, academic summer programs.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Advocate for funding out of school summer academic programs so children can attend without costs. (State Legislature Advocacy)



ACTION  
STEP  
3B

Evaluate data for each central Iowa district, Kindergarten through grade 12, on disproportionate representation based on race, ethnicity and linguistic diversity in special education enrollment; discipline (in-school suspension, out of school suspension, expulsions and interim removal); enrollment in gifted and talented programs; and graduation rates. Use this information to have conversations with districts regarding strategies to address areas of disproportionality.

## 4

### Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of 8th graders proficient in reading from 78% (2014-15) to 85% by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
4

Evaluate data to examine correlations between non-proficient readers and other indicators of risk: chronic absence, discipline and expulsions and dropout rates at each grade level, grade 7 through 12. Use this information to create strategies to address contributing risk factors for non-proficient readers.



# 5

## Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



### PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Increase the high school graduation rate for central Iowa students from 92% (5-year graduation rate, 2013) to 95% by 2020. Increase the high school graduation rate for central Iowa students in poverty (receiving free and reduced-price lunch) from 83% (4-year graduation rate, 2014) to 95% by 2020.



### ACTION STEP 5A

Partner with area colleges to identify tutors. Partner with other agencies to identify mentors. Create school-based tutoring and mentoring programs. Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing or math competencies.



### ACTION STEP 5B

Examine existing programs to facilitate the transition of at-risk students from middle school to high school. Examine information regarding middle school programs to engage middle schoolers in school-sponsored activities. Expand successful programs to engage middle schoolers. Extend programs focused on at-risk students transitioning from middle to high school.



### ACTION STEP 5C

Create a pathway for at-risk students through school-to-work programs, including online options and options for dual enrollment and career readiness. Link pathway programs with tutoring and mentoring programs.

# 6

## Early Childhood — Grade 12 Education



### PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Increase parent education opportunities to improve communication with parents regarding public education and to increase engagement in children's education.



### ACTION STEP 6

Create a parent training (Parent University) toolkit and communication strategies for navigating the school system (conferences, grading, common core, college, district contacts) and include financial literacy and interpreters/translation for English Language Learner parents.



# EDUCATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH GRADE 12 & ADULT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT READINESS

# 1

## Adult Education and Employment



### PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Increase high school equivalency diploma (HSED) completion from 827 (2014) to 2,000 per year for 5 years (2020) with a cumulative goal of increasing the number of equivalency diplomas by 10,000. 25% of the 10,000 will be ages 18-22, increasing the completion rate for this age group from 2.6% (2014) to 10% (Bridges to Success Initiative).



### ACTION STEP 1A

Partner with DMACC and other community organizations to implement enhanced HSED preparation programming to increase the number of high school equivalency diploma awards.



### ACTION STEP 1B

Identify supportive services necessary to aid in an individual's ability to obtain HSED or advanced degrees, including but not limited to barriers such as transportation, domestic violence, evictions, illegal garnishments, navigation of public benefits and child care assistance. Build plan to address barriers.



### ACTION STEP 1C

Develop a volunteer strategy to grow a network of individuals who are interested in teaching, mentoring and/or tutoring individuals being served through Adult Basic Education and ELL programs.



### ADVOCACY EFFORT

Expand opportunities for Iowans to pursue a high school equivalency degree; establish a task force at the Iowa Department of Education to explore new ways to help adults pursue and complete their HSED. (Skills2Compete Coalition, 2016) (State Legislature Advocacy)



### ADVOCACY EFFORT

Double federal funding for Adult Basic Education and ESL/ELL programming. (National Skills Coalition, 2016) (Federal Advocacy)



### ADVOCACY EFFORT

Build an advocacy agenda/strategy to increase state funding for Adult Basic Education. (State Legislature Advocacy)

In Iowa, a person without a high school diploma is

# 3x

more likely to be unemployed in comparison to a person who has a diploma or higher

Source: American Community Survey

# 2

## Adult Education and Employment



### PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Increase the percentage of central Iowa adults who have high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 75% by 2025, with educational outcomes aligning to workforce needs. (Capitol Crossroads - Human Capitol/EDGE Plan)



### ACTION STEP 2A

Continue to develop training programs and work-based learning opportunities that align with quality, living-wage employment opportunities.



### ACTION STEP 2C

Research best-practice strategies to integrate HiSET, ESL and skill training programs within work environments and design an implementation plan.



### ACTION STEP 2E

Establish an Offender Re-Entry Task Force, and develop a coordinated community plan for education and employment readiness for the offender population, as well as employer-engagement strategies. Strategies developed could be replicated for other hard-to-employ individuals (i.e. child abuse registry, back child support, etc.)



### ADVOCACY EFFORT

Maintain current investments in adult basic education, PACE programs, pathway navigators, industry sector partnerships and GAP tuition assistance at the level of \$12.5 million to ensure that these opportunities are available in each of the state's 15 service areas. (Skills2Compete Coalition, 2016/2017) (State Legislature Advocacy)



### ACTION STEP 2B

Inventory and update existing Career Pathway Maps that include a cross-walk to available training opportunities within the community that align with the Pathway Maps.



### ADVOCACY EFFORT

Support the goal of the Iowa Department of Education's Secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) Task Force to develop a comprehensive career pathway system that will afford every student the opportunity to fully explore and pursue career and college opportunities (Skills2Compete Coalition, 2016) (State Legislature Advocacy)



### ACTION STEP 2D

Inventory and evaluate effectiveness of current strategies to engage employers with educational institutions, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, work-based learning opportunities, internship programs, etc.



### ADVOCACY EFFORTS

- Provide an increased investment of \$500,000 to fund additional adult basic education and technical training instructors in correctional facilities, in addition to the current corrections education appropriation. (Skills2Compete Coalition, 2016) (State Legislature Advocacy)
- Advocate for "ban the box" legislation to increase employment opportunities for ex-offenders. (2016/2017) (State Legislature Advocacy)



# EDUCATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH GRADE 12 & ADULT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT READINESS

## 3

### Adult Education and Employment



Increase the number of youth placed in Youth Employment opportunities by 50% by 2020.

PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE



ACTION  
STEP  
3A

Inventory Summer Youth Employment programs, including current capacity.



ACTION  
STEP  
3B

Increase the availability of supportive services for youth and their families seeking education and job opportunities.



ACTION  
STEP  
3C

Research best practices for increasing employer engagement, and design an engagement implementation plan.



ACTION  
STEP  
3D

Develop a strategy to increase the number of work permits for youth in the Urban Core, ages 14-18.

## 4

### Adult Education and Employment



Increase the number of people from vulnerable populations are served through workforce programs by 10% in Polk, Dallas and Warren counties.

PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE



ACTION  
STEP  
4A

Double the number of people who receive employment and training services through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP E&T).

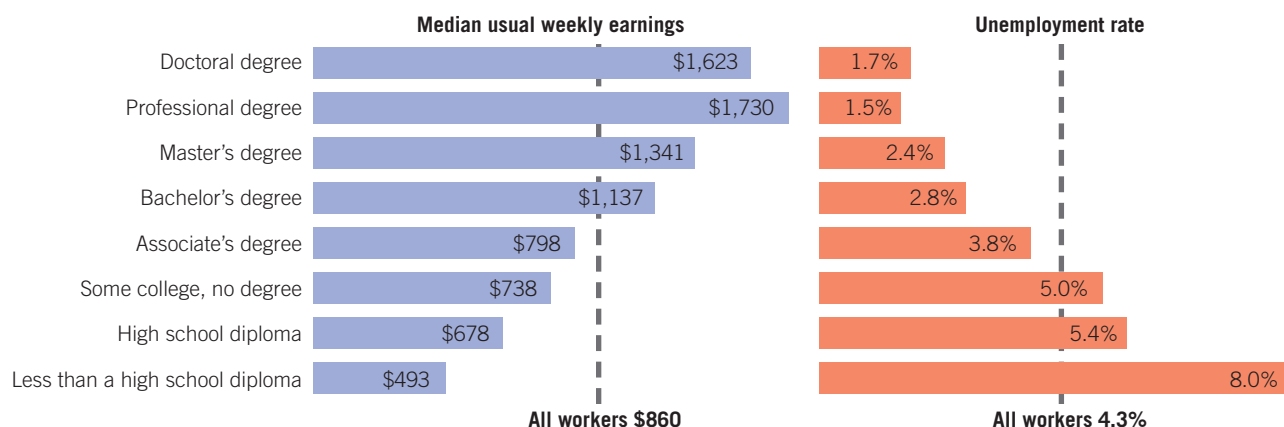


ACTION  
STEP  
4B

Develop a standard benefit screening tool.

## THE LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND INCOME

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2015



Note: Data are for persons 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



## PRIORITY AREA:

# Transportation, Homelessness & Housing

*“Quality, affordable housing is a key element of a strong and secure Iowa.”*  
— **Thomas Vilsack**

Transportation, Homelessness & Housing are grouped together as one priority because they all connect to helping individuals and families live and work in our community.

When families can't pay for housing, they often enter into a vicious cycle of poverty that makes it all but impossible to build a better life, and they ultimately may end up without a home. The housing priority includes securing more low-income, affordable housing and reducing homelessness and closely aligns with the Housing Tomorrow plan. In the

future, Housing Tomorrow will act as a tool to help our region's jurisdictions address housing challenges as they arise.

Transportation is also connected because affordable housing is often not located near jobs or available at the times when public transportation is needed to get people to and from work. A cost-effective method of transportation is crucial to get people from home to school or work and back so they can earn enough to get out of poverty.

## Performance Measures & Action Steps

# 1

### Public Transportation



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Create a Transportation Resource Guide (public and private transportation) by end of 2016 to help community members know their transportation options and where to go for transportation assistance. (DART Forward 2035)



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

DART's mobility coordinator, United Way representative and MPO to discuss and create a plan for the development of this guide, including using 2-1-1 or other call centers to access the guide. (CISS vans, etc.; translated in several languages)



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Facilitate more training with human service agencies and case workers on transportation options in the community to allow for the coordination of housing, employment and day care locations with transportation availability.

## MYTH

**If you're not officially poor, you're doing okay.**

## TRUTH

The federal poverty line for a family of two parents and two children in 2012 was \$23,283. Basic needs cost at least twice that in 615 of America's cities and regions.



# TRANSPORTATION, HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING

2

## Public Transportation



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Ensure that the transportation needs of those most in need are taken into account in the development and addition of transit services. (DART Forward 2035)



ACTION  
STEP  
2

Ensure representation of organizations and those they serve in the DART Forward 2035 plan update. DART Forward 2035 is the long-range transit system plan for the Greater Des Moines region.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Advocate for long-term sustainable funding sources for public transportation (both local and state advocacy).

1

## Private Transportation



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Ensure that the transportation needs of those who cannot utilize public transportation are met.



ACTION  
STEP  
1

Assist those with vehicles to continue to utilize them through the removal of barriers placed by an inability to pay fines and fees.

1

## Homelessness



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Reduce homelessness by half by 2020. (Point in Time Count – January Polk County Continuum of Care Board)



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Broadly share and embrace a community plan to reduce homelessness in Polk County.



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Create a standard for client placement, building on the model utilized for the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness.

2

## Homelessness

PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Improve the coordination of services and supports, based on vulnerability index scores, focused on housing individuals and families experiencing or facing homelessness. (Polk County Continuum of Care Board)

ACTION  
STEP  
2

Support, fund and enhance Centralized Intake for Polk County; engage service providers and other partners in quarterly meetings to assess and provide continual improvement suggestions to the system, including evaluation of governmental policies to minimize disruptions to homeless individuals.

3

## Homelessness

PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Develop deepened relationships with landlords and other housing providers to expand housing opportunities for the homeless population. (HUD 7b.1 & 7b.2, Polk County Continuum of Care Board)

ACTION  
STEP  
3

Explore the establishment and feasibility of housing navigators in the community based on successful models in other communities.

1

## Housing

PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Decrease the percentage of Extremely Low Income rental households (below 30% of Area Median Income) who are severely rent burdened (paying more than 50% of their income on rent) by 10%. (currently 74% in Polk County). (Housing Tomorrow Plan Principle; Plan DSM)

ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Increase the number of new rental units that are affordable to households making less than 30% of Average Median Income (AMI).

ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Increase the number of existing rental units that are accessible and affordable to households making less than 30% AMI.

ACTION  
STEP  
1C

Stabilize families so that children are not moved from school to school because of housing issues.



# TRANSPORTATION, HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING

## 2

### Housing



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Improve the distribution of new rental and owned affordable units around the region. (Housing Tomorrow Plan Principle 3)



ACTION  
STEP  
2

Align new unit creation with low-wage job centers. (Housing Tomorrow Plan)

## 3

### Housing



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Improve the variety of types of affordable housing available to meet the needs of a diverse population. (Housing Tomorrow Plan Principle 1: supported/reflected under Goals 1 & 4 of the City's updated Comprehensive Plan, Plan DSM)



ACTION  
STEP  
3

Encourage cities to adopt flexible guidelines for design and construction to encourage units that are attractive to singles, smaller families and seniors. (Housing Tomorrow Plan Principle 1: supported/reflected under Goals 1 & 4 of the City's updated Comprehensive Plan, Plan DSM)

## 4

### Housing



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the availability and coordination of supportive services for households living in affordable housing.



ACTION  
STEP  
4

Provide supportive services that encourage landlords to accept low-income tenants and those with barriers to housing.





## PRIORITY AREA:

# Change: Individual, Place-Based & System (New Iowans, Child Care Cliff Effect)

*“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”*  
— John F. Kennedy

In this priority, there are three important components of change: individual change, place-based change and system change (including support for New Iowans and addressing the child care cliff effect, preventing the loss of benefits when a family’s income increases). Individual change includes encouraging individuals to know and appreciate neighbors and other community members from diverse backgrounds, treat others with respect and take individual action to better their community. Place-based change targets strategies to address needs in the highest poverty neighborhoods of central Iowa. It also prioritizes solutions proposed by people who reside in the neighborhoods. This component highlights the need for the development of an equitable approach to address poverty based on need as determined by ZIP code and promotes the replication of innovative programs like Viva East Bank!, a model coalition for neighborhood revitalization.

System change is multifaceted and refers to changes in organizational culture, policies and procedures within individual organizations or across organizations that enhance or streamline access and reduce or eliminate barriers to

needed services by a target population. (Systems Change Framework, Desert Vista Consulting). A part of system change addresses a family’s ability to move out of poverty when an increase in income results in a loss of child care benefits (cliff effect). Current State Child Care Assistance Legislation creates a huge disincentive for parents to advance in jobs to earn a financially self-sufficient wage. This is called the child care cliff effect because they often lose public benefits before they are self-sufficient. The child care cliff effect in Iowa’s CCA program is severe. A parent deciding whether to find a job that pays more per hour or allows more hours per week could find herself facing a dilemma.

An additional component of system change is related to the poverty of newcomers to our country. Whether Iowa was their community of initial resettlement or they came to Iowa as secondary migrants from other states, New Iowans today face greater challenges than ever before. Immigrants, including those for whom status is not clear, face challenges that prevent them from moving out of poverty. Both populations are addressed in this priority, and references are included in the other priorities as well.

## Performance Measures & Action Steps

1

### Individual Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of central Iowans who feel connected and embedded in the region. (Central Iowa Human Capital Survey, Human Capital- Capital Crossroads)



ACTION  
STEP  
1

Develop and/or promote strategies that highlight opportunities for community engagement. Explore the use of an online portal to connect community interest to events and projects that individual members are interested in supporting.



# CHANGE: INDIVIDUAL, PLACE-BASED & SYSTEM (NEW IOWANS, CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT)

## 2

### Individual Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the number of people who respond: “In the last 12 months, I have received recognition for helping to improve the city or area where I live.” (Gallup Well Being Index)



ACTION  
STEP  
2

Engage community members in Connections Matter. Connections Matter is a partnership among the Central Iowa ACEs 360 Steering Committee, Trauma Informed Care Project and Developing Brain Group. The project’s mission is to find a shared message about brain development and trauma, and to engage community members in building healthy relationships.

## 3

### Individual Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the number of connections identified through the Leadership Link portal. (Regional Leadership Council, Social Capital- Capital Crossroads, Greater Des Moines Partnership (GDMP), United Way of Central Iowa (UWCI), Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines (CFGDM))



ACTION  
STEP  
3

Promote the efforts of leadership groups, including the Regional Leadership Council, Black Urban Professionals and Meeting of the Mind; lift programs and expansion plans that empower and create connections for people to lead in central Iowa.

## MYTH

We’re winning the war on poverty.

## TRUTH

The number of households with children living on less than \$2 a day per person has grown 160% since 1996, to 1.65 million families in 2011.

4

## Individual Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase responses from 85% to 95% of individuals who believe people are treated with civility & respect in central Iowa. (Central Iowa Human Capital Survey, Human Capital- Capital Crossroads, Ray Center at Drake University, Show Some Respect Campaign- Social Capital- Capital Crossroads)



ACTION  
STEP  
4A

Develop intentional ways to involve New Iowans in the community.



ACTION  
STEP  
4C

Support established culturally-relevant efforts that address the needs of minorities.



ACTION  
STEP  
4E

Create and provide a public awareness campaign about the myths of poverty and engage the community in conversations on this topic.



ACTION  
STEP  
4B

Research and implement workshops on diversity and inclusion, such as Navigating Differences, into existing programs when possible.



ACTION  
STEP  
4D

Provide support for impoverished leaders so they do not burn out. (e.g. Des Moines Black Urban Professionals, Meeting of the Minds, Pyramid Theater, Latina Leadership Initiative)

5

## Individual Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of people who vote in local elections. (Central Iowa Human Capital Survey, GDMP)



ACTION  
STEP  
5A

Conduct a campaign to register voters.



ACTION  
STEP  
5B

Work with civility efforts through the Show Some Respect Campaign.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Work for legislative change regarding restrictions on voting rights for ex-offenders. (State Legislative Advocacy)



# CHANGE: INDIVIDUAL, PLACE-BASED & SYSTEM (NEW IOWANS, CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT)

1

## Place-Based Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Decrease the percent of individuals living at 100% of poverty in the Urban Core from 32.1% (7,974) to 25% (2013 American Community Survey) by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Develop concentrated workforce development, including training opportunities in ZIP codes with high levels of poverty.



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Expand summer work experience for high school students, including exposure to higher education.

2

## Place-Based Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase home ownership in the Urban Core from 45% (2013) to 60% (American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates) by 2020.



ACTION  
STEP  
2

Offer customized neighborhood Home Ownership Bootcamps.

3

## Place-Based Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase minority small business (entrepreneurship) opportunities to grow minority businesses from 3% (8,000) in Iowa to 5%. (U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, Iowa Small Business Profile, published in 2014)



ACTION  
STEP  
3

Offer Start-a-Thons and hold Dream Builder classes in neighborhoods to help minority entrepreneurs learn about business ownership.

4

### Place-Based Change



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Expand opportunities for minority asset building through initiatives similar to African American Financial Capabilities Initiative.



ACTION  
STEP  
4

Explore Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) as a strategy to build self-sufficiency.

1

### System Change: New Iowans



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the diversity of the individuals involved in the implementation of the action steps for New Iowans; address needs of Dallas and Warren counties.



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Involve bilingual community members who represent New Iowan groups in this work.



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Review action steps with community members involved with work related to immigrants, including those who have undocumented status.



ACTION  
STEP  
1C

Collect and review data for Dallas and Warren counties that may connect to work with New Iowans.

2

### System Change: New Iowans



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the coordination of the community's efforts to support New Iowans by 50% as indicated on a survey of program leaders.



ACTION  
STEP  
2A

Promote service delivery models that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, such as the community navigator model.



ACTION  
STEP  
2B

Provide formation guidance to ethnic-based groups including options for group organization (501C3), and develop strategies to disseminate contact information to increase refugee group participation in community opportunities including boards, committees, etc.



ACTION  
STEP  
2C

Collaborate with DART and regional transportation providers to address transportation barriers that New Iowans face regarding using public transportation.



# CHANGE: INDIVIDUAL, PLACE-BASED & SYSTEM (NEW IOWANS, CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT)

## 3

### System Change: New Iowans



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the quality and accessibility of ESL opportunities for adults in central Iowa with consideration of the progression of language learning (listening/speaking/reading/writing).



ACTION  
STEP  
4

Collaborate with local ESL providers to facilitate the development of a standards-based ESL Teacher Academy to increase teacher skills. Train the Trainer model will be considered.

## 4

### System Change: New Iowans



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the percentage of central Iowa New Iowans with a high school equivalency diploma from 3% to 8%. (Number of 25+ foreign born (citizen + non-citizen) individuals in Polk, Dallas and Warren counties who have a HS Diploma or Equivalent = 8471 (25%) (Bo6009 2010-2014 ACS)] Number of 25+ foreign born (citizen + non-citizen) individuals in Polk county with a HS Equivalent diploma only = 612 (3%) (PUMS 2010-2014 ACS). Of the total foreign born, 3% have a HS equivalent diploma.)



ACTION  
STEP  
4

Support the development and implementation of an education agenda for the Refugee Alliance.

## Calling Iowa Home

### Definitions:

**New Iowans:** Someone who was born outside of the United States or was a permanent resident of another country who has come to Iowa to live.

**Refugee:** A person who has been forced to flee their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.

**Immigrant:** A person who voluntarily relocates to a new country to take up permanent residence.

**Secondary Migration:** Refugees whose first state of resettlement is not Iowa but who chose to relocate to Iowa, usually for employment or to reunite with family members.

### MYTH

Handouts are bankrupting us.

### TRUTH

In 2012, total welfare funding was 0.47% of the federal budget.

5

### System Change: New Iowans



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Make Iowa a welcoming community for refugees and immigrants through community efforts, including employer-led and non-profit.



ACTION  
STEP  
5A

Identify and implement strategies to create a community that is welcoming and accepting of diversity and new populations, and clarify the positive economic impact of New Iowans in central Iowa.



ACTION  
STEP  
5B

Address the unique circumstances of individuals who lack clear status in our community and how this impacts access to employment, the court system and other needed services. Assist in identifying pathways to status change.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORT

Advocate for increased resources by state agencies to support employment, adult English as a Second Language, education, interpretation and increased coordination between refugee-serving providers across the state. (State Advocacy)

## Gaining Ground: Child Care Cliff Effect

Even before the OpportUNITY Plan for 2016 had been released, progress on one of the core issues in System Change can be seen in changes made to the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Fund grant. The Department of Human Services and the United Ways of Iowa helped inform changes to the state plan that will be positive for Iowa's children and families and also child care providers.

- The eligibility for Child Care Assistance (CCA) is increasing to 12 months (from current 6-month).
- There will be a 3-month job search allowed if families receiving CCA lose employment; currently individuals lose CCA benefits immediately if they lose employment.
- Families will remain eligible for CCA when there is a temporary change in their work and/or education status during the 12-month period. Families with fluctuating hours of employment or work/training/education currently lose assistance during those periods.
- Families will be able to maintain CCA for at least one year after their income exceeds the program limit. Currently they immediately lose eligibility.

These are definitive wins on the Child Care Cliff Effect front, but the work continues.



# CHANGE: INDIVIDUAL, PLACE-BASED & SYSTEM (NEW IOWANS, CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT)

# 1

## System Change: The Child Care Cliff Effect



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Decrease the number of families in central Iowa affected by the child care cliff effect from 16,180 to 8,090. (Polk, Warren, Dallas Counties; 2010-2014 estimates, census ACS, table B17022)



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Connect people accessing benefits with more training/education for middle-skill jobs so they no longer need the public benefits. (Skills2Compete, Recommendation 1)



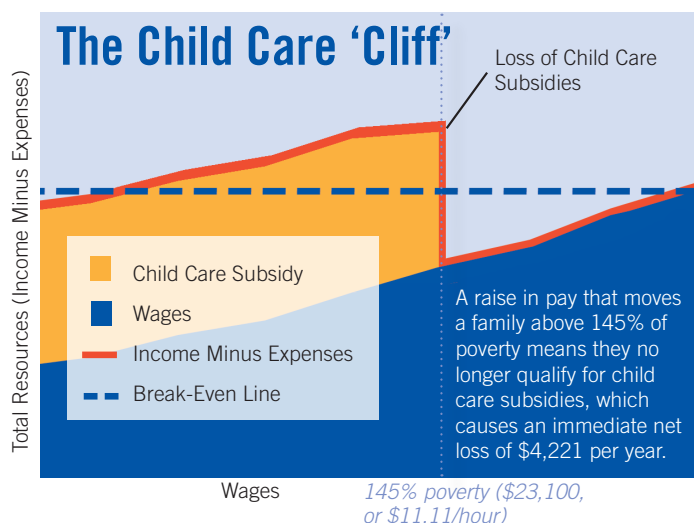
ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Develop private employer partnerships to create affordable child care at workplaces and in the community.



ADVOCACY  
EFFORTS

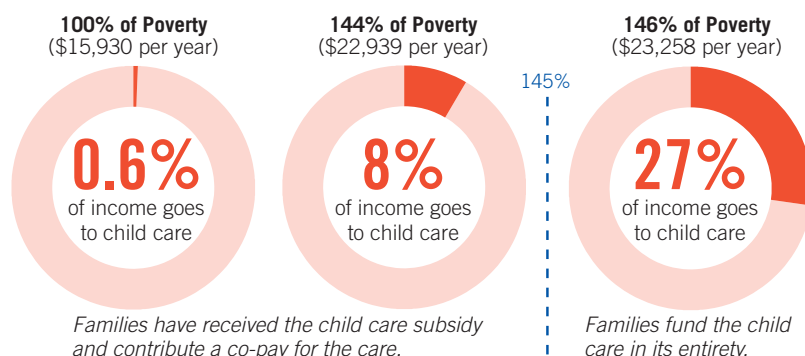
- Advocate for data collection at the Iowa Dept. of Human Services (IDHS) to better understand the families impacted by the child care cliff effect. (State Legislature Advocacy)
- Ask Iowa Legislature and governor to increase eligibility levels to 185% of Federal Poverty Line or above with small step decreases in benefits as the individual receives increases in salary/income. Start the change one month after an increase in salary/income. (Skills2Compete, Recommendation 2; State Legislature Advocacy)
- Urge Polk County General Assistance to consider changing Income guidelines enough to impact the child care cliff effect. (State Legislature Advocacy)
- Raise the minimum wage so families can afford to pay for child care. (State Legislature Advocacy)



Source: Child & Family Policy Center. "What Does the Cliff Effect Look Like Today?" Sept. 16, 2015.

## The Family's Share

Single parents with one preschool-age child pay an increasing portion of child care expenses—depending on income—until their wages reach 145% of poverty. Then they pay all of it.



Source: Child & Family Policy Center. "What Does the Cliff Effect Look Like Today?" Sept. 16, 2015.





## PRIORITY AREA: Food Insecurity

*"The freedom of man, I contend, is the freedom to eat."*  
— Eleanor Roosevelt

People living in poverty have annual incomes that often do not provide enough money to meet their basic needs, including food. In food-insecure households, access to food is limited by a lack of money or other resources. For families

to learn, work and thrive in our community, healthy and nutritious food must be accessible and affordable. Often, families must choose between paying for food and paying for medicine, transportation or utilities.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Feeding America surveyed 2,300 of Iowa's approximately 530,000 food pantry clients for the Iowa report of the 2014 Hunger in America study.



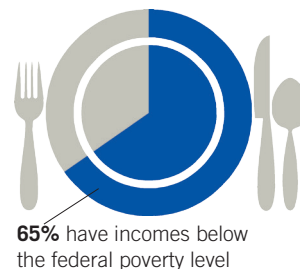
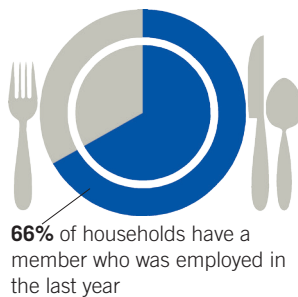
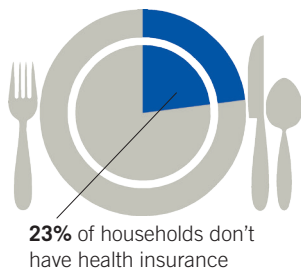
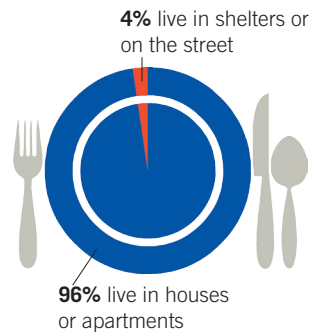
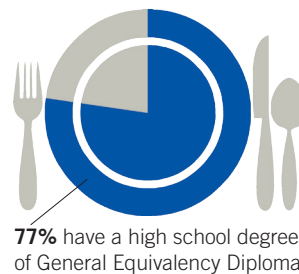
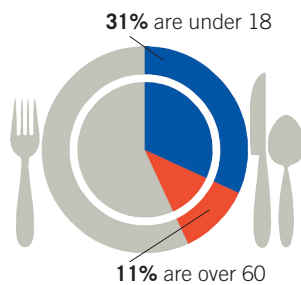
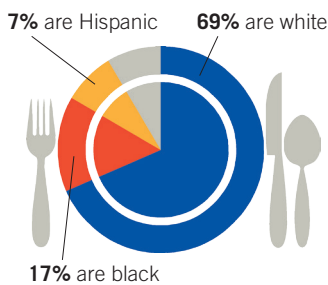
**▲ 22.1%**  
More families served.  
(5,582 total families served.)



**▲ 13.7%**  
More individuals served.  
(14,369 total individuals served.)

**315**

Families used a food pantry for the first time ever.





# FOOD INSECURITY

## Performance Measures & Action Steps

1

### Food Insecurity



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Decrease the number of individuals in Polk county who are food insecure by 50% from 54,080 to 27,040 and by 50% in Dallas and Warren from 6,470 to 3,235 and from 4,910 to 2,455, respectively. (Source: Map the Meal report) (Hunger Free Polk; Hunger Free Dallas County)



ACTION  
STEP  
1A

Support Hunger Free Polk County and Dallas County Health Needs Assessment.



ACTION  
STEP  
1B

Increase the number of people who visit food pantries and community meal sites as a means to increase food security by adding additional sites in schools, parks and non-profit organizations. In 2015, 42,713 people (unduplicated) visited Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) food pantries.



ACTION  
STEP  
1C

Increase retail access to healthy food in low-income neighborhoods by exploring models like Daily Table, food kiosks, food trucks, “pop-up” food markets; utilizing empty buildings; and offering food in existing community spaces.

2

### Food Insecurity



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the effectiveness and accuracy of the data collection system utilized by our pantry delivery systems. (Hunger Free Polk; Hunger Free Dallas County)



ACTION  
STEP  
2A

Assess the current data system’s functionality, and identify opportunities to better integrate food pantry data with human service-based programs utilizing the best system, intake process questions, etc. (Hunger Free Polk)



ACTION  
STEP  
2B

Add questions to centralized intake in regard to food access and services, specifically for SNAP benefits.

3

### Food Insecurity



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the number of eligible central Iowans accessing food assistance (SNAP and WIC). (CY2015 – SNAP recipients Polk County=21,573 individuals.) Source: Iowa Dept. of Human Services FY2015 (Oct1 to Sept30) Polk county WIC data= 17,038 individuals. Source: Polk county WIC agency (Hunger Free Polk; Hunger Free Dallas County)



ACTION  
STEP  
3

Train centralized, integrated intake staff across the human services and non-profit sector to be able to access the SNAP application, educate users on SNAP benefits and enroll individuals.

4

### Food Insecurity



PERFORMANCE  
MEASURE

Increase the number of children participating in summer feeding programs. (The current number of meal sites 47.) Source: Summer Meal Site Finder (online map), USDA



ACTION  
STEP  
4A

Identify and remove barriers to increasing the number of sites participating.



ACTION  
STEP  
4B

Assess and remove current barriers to increasing the number of children participating (i.e. poor food choices, lack of coordination, inability to feed parents and other children).

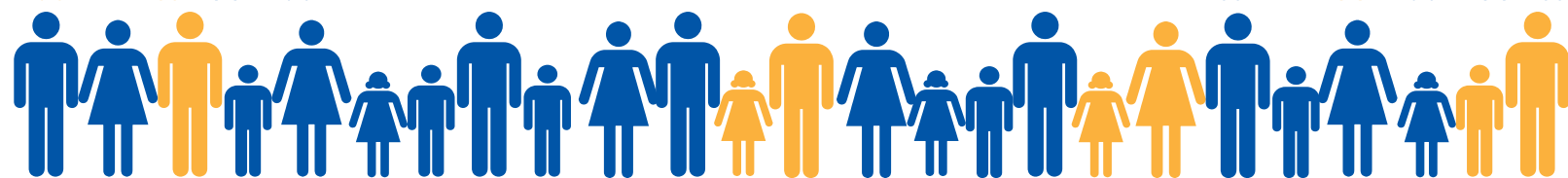
## MYTH

**Black dads are the problem.**

## TRUTH

Among men who don't live with their children, black fathers are more likely than white or Hispanic dads to have a daily presence in their kids' lives.

# Organizing for Impact.



## How We'll Organize to Implement our Plan

OpportUNITY needs all of us to work together to move our neighbors out of poverty. We could all work independently and then compare our results, but that is not the most efficient and effective strategy. Instead, we plan to put our community plan into action through collective impact.

Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of individuals from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration. This approach involves having a centralized infrastructure or framework, a dedicated staff and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants. We come together, commit, have the structure to keep us moving and work as a team to get the results we want and need!

## The Five Conditions of Collective Success

Our research shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support organizations.

# 1

### **Common Agenda – Implementing the Plan**

Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. All participants must agree, however, on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole.

# 2

### **Shared Measurement Systems – Performance Measures, as Outlined in the Plan**

Developing a shared measurement system is essential to collective impact. Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other's successes and failures.

## MYTH

The days of old ladies eating cat food are over.

## TRUTH

The share of elderly single women living in extreme poverty jumped 31% from 2011 to 2012.



**3** ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities – We All Commit to Doing What We Do Best to Succeed***  
 Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which he or she excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others. The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

**4** ***Continuous Communications – We Communicate with Each Other Frequently and Thoroughly***  
 Building trust and consensus among many partners will not happen overnight. It requires that participants meet regularly to get to know each other and develop a shared sense of commitment and motivation.

**5** ***Backbone Support Organizations – United Way of Central Iowa has Agreed to be the Backbone of this Plan***  
 Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails.

The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations that can plan, manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology, communications support and data collection and reporting and handle the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.

*Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review*

# We Can Do It.



We are a Community of Opportunity, Innovation and Caring

There is no doubt that central Iowans can work together to implement a plan to move people out of poverty and toward prosperity! Here are some examples of recent innovations, initiatives and actions that are noteworthy and demonstrate what can be accomplished when we work together to move our community forward:

## Noteworthy: Education

The Bridges to Success initiative is a comprehensive program supporting adult learners that is driven by community partners. The intent of this effort is to engage additional community members in an evidence-based approach to increasing HSED completion within Central Iowa—with a bold goal of 10,000 HSED awards by 2020. This approach would include system changes within the existing preparation model, including four foundational elements for success:



1. A “contextualized curriculum”: HiSET coursework set within the context of the areas of greatest job potential in the state of Iowa
2. The development of study habits among participants that closely mirror those expected in college
3. Full-time, master’s level, instructors who have been trained in the skills required to teach adults with numerous educational barriers
4. Extensive wrap-around and supportive services to mitigate barriers to success

## Noteworthy: Transportation, Homelessness & Housing

- *Housing Tomorrow Plan* recently developed by the community and coordinated by Polk County Trust Fund.
- Significant decrease in the number of homeless veterans because of the great work by the Polk County Homeless Veterans Response team and by utilizing resources such as Centralized Intake.
- *PlanDSM | Creating Our Tomorrow* developed as a process to envision the future of Des Moines with the development of a new comprehensive plan, a policy-guiding document for land use and community-wide development.
- *DART Forward 2035 Plan* developed by the community and administered by DART.



## Noteworthy: Change: Place-Based, Individual and System

Viva East Bank! is an initiative to revitalize three urban core neighborhoods. It exists because no single action or organization can achieve the revitalization of these three neighborhoods on its own. By focusing on neighborhoods, the Viva East Bank! model allows for a place-based approach to addressing the needs of the community. Viva East Bank! has five areas of focus:



1. Community building
2. Infrastructure
3. Community programming
4. Housing
5. Business districts

To date, over \$9.3 million has been invested into the East Bank neighborhoods. This value does not include staff or volunteer time.

## MYTH

Absent dads are the problem.

## TRUTH

60% of low-income dads see at least one of their children daily. Another 16% see their children weekly.

### **Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families:**

- Diversified workforce development training
- Targeted young adult employment development (ages 16-30)
- Collaboration through multiple community agencies
- One-stop-shop for community resources
- Minority business development

The Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families serves as a hub for community members seeking training and employment opportunities that result in earning a livable wage. Through their individualized advising and career coaching, concentrated efforts and partnerships with non-profits, educational institutions and local businesses, the center is changing the lives of central Iowans seeking to transition from poverty to sustainable living wages ●.

### **Refugee Alliance**

Given the multitude of challenges refugees and the agencies serving them face in Iowa today, a group of stakeholders resolved to create a unified plan to more efficiently use limited resources to better serve refugees. From July to October 2013, 80 agencies and individuals from a variety of refugee communities, government agencies and service organizations participated in planning sessions. This group continues to network and oversee the work of education, housing and employment subcommittees. In addition, a Refugee Coordinator has been hired to oversee and coordinate efforts to support refugees in our community.

### **Noteworthy: Individual Change:**



Show Some Respect, a campaign of the Iowa Civility Project, urges Iowans to be respectful and encourage others to do the same. Individuals can sign a pledge to show some respect or view helpful tips to spread respect in your community.

## **MYTH**

**Go to college,  
get out of  
poverty.**

## **TRUTH**

In 2012, about 1.1 million people who made less than \$25,000 a year worked full time and were heads of household and had a bachelor's degree.

### **Noteworthy: Food Insecurity:**



Over the past year, important steps have been taken in central Iowa to improve food security. Since the Summit in June, 2014, there have been innovations and expansions. Following is a list of efforts supporting the improvement of food security in central Iowa.

- **Healthy Food Access Portal.** In 2009, PolicyLink, The Food Trust, and The Reinvestment Fund launched a campaign, with partners and stakeholders from across the country, to raise public awareness and educate policy makers about the limited and inequitable access to supermarkets and grocery stores in both rural and urban America.
- **Partnership for a Hunger Free Polk County.** The purpose of this consortium is to facilitate better coordination among food safety-net providers. To better assess the hunger crisis, the Partnership commissioned a food insecurity study to identify obstacles and barriers for both food providers and recipients as it applies to meeting the needs for emergency food and meals in Polk County. Based on that study, the Partnership developed a plan and will act as a catalyst for change in ensuring residents have access to needed food. One part of the project is a real-time map of food pantries in Polk County. Accomplishments include the establishment of additional food pantries, extended hours at other pantries, a mobile food pantry, and the purchase of a food warehouse.
- **Forest Ave. Outreach.** Forest Avenue Outreach acquired a free piece of land in the Riverbend neighborhood and put together a community orchard. This is a cooperative garden and is open to any person willing to volunteer at least 2 hours a week.

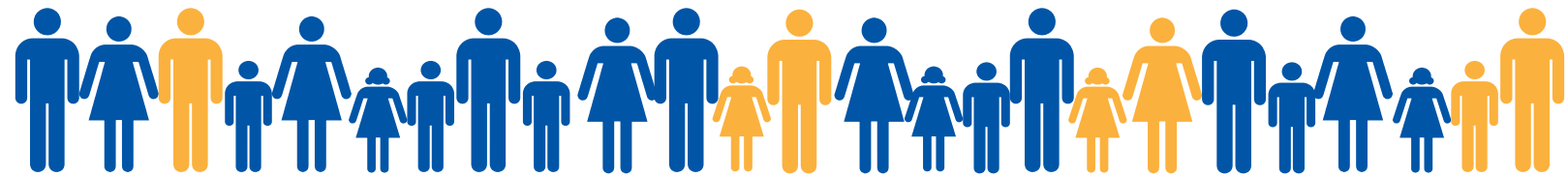
## **5 Ways to Be Considerate to a Stranger**

*Being considerate not only helps others, but it gives each of us something to take pride in and feel good about.*

*Here are five ways you can show respect and consideration to a stranger:*

1. Be patient (even when you don't want to).
2. Show sympathy.
3. Appreciate the service of others.
4. Give your full attention.
5. Give up your seat.

# Our Path Forward.



A Model for the Future

Since the inception of this highly impactful and new approach to reducing poverty, United Way of Central Iowa has been the leader, staffer and convener of OpporTUNITY. As we move to the implementation phase of this important work, it will be essential to diversify and broaden the leadership, funding and staffing. To that end, United Way of Central Iowa is honored to coordinate the next phase of this work, but WE NEED YOU!

## Organizational Structure

United Way is committed to working with others to staff, resource and provide oversight for this effort. Working Groups have been formed to support the work of each priority in the plan. Individuals and organizations who committed to this work will make up the membership of the OpporTUNITY teams and will continue to welcome new community members interested in reducing poverty in central Iowa.

## Staffing and Governance

As we move forward with our commitment to the implementation of the OpporTUNITY Plan, it will be essential to have diversified funding and dedicated staff working on these efforts. The following is the model of organization to implement the OpporTUNITY Plan:

- UWCI will have oversight of this initiative.
- The Leadership Roundtable will provide oversight for prioritizing and leading the work.
- One full-time dedicated person will lead this work, lead the Priority Working Groups, interface with government leaders and funders and perform other duties necessary for plan implementation and success.
- A second full-time staff person will attend all meetings and help facilitate the communication and collaboration among all members and organizations and will perform duties as needed to support the OpporTUNITY work.

## Budget

Funding to support staffing, benefits, equipment and supplies will be approximately \$200,000 for 5 years for a total of \$1 million.

## MYTH

The homeless are drunk street people.

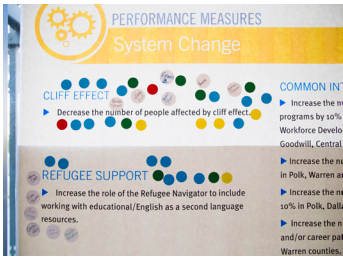
## TRUTH

One in 45 kids in the United States experiences homelessness each year. In New York City alone, 22,000 children are homeless.



# Opportunity Summit

November 3, 2015



# Commitments

**Thank you to the following central Iowa organizations and businesses for endorsing the OpportUNITY plan for poverty reduction. As the work continues, this list will grow, and updated information will be available on the website.**

- 4 R Kids ECI
- 2The Top
- AARP
- AFL-CIO
- African American Leadership Forum
- Age Friendly Greater DM
- Al Exito
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Altoona Campus
- American Friends Service Committee
- AMOS
- Art Force Iowa
- Athene USA
- Anawim Housing
- Back 2 School Iowa
- Bank of the West
- Bankers Trust
- Beacon of Life
- Beckley Automotive
- Bhutanese Community of Iowa
- Bidwell
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Blank Children's Hospital
- BriWen Industries
- Bridges to Success
- Brooks Lodden, PC
- Business Volunteer Council
- Bureau of Refugee Services
- Candeo
- Capitol Park Early Learning Center
- Care More Clinic
- Catholic Charities
- Central College
- Central Iowa Shelter & Services
- Central Iowa Works
- Central Iowa Workforce Investment Board
- Centralized Intake – Primary Health Care
- Charlus Gabus Ford
- Child & Family Policy Center
- Children and Families Urban Movement
- Children and Families of Iowa
- ChildServe
- Chrysalis Foundation
- Church World Service
- City of Des Moines
- Common Bonds
- Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines
- Community Housing Initiative
- Community Youth Concepts
- Corinthian Baptist Church
- Courage League
- Creative Visions
- Cross Ministries
- DART
- DMACC
- DMARC
- Dallas County Public Health Nursing Services
- Des Moines Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta
- Des Moines Area Hunger Hike
- Des Moines Area MPO
- Des Moines Field Office of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Des Moines Health Center, Inc.
- Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency
- Des Moines Public Schools
- Des Moines University
- Directors Council
- Disability Rights Iowa
- Drake University
- Drake University Adult Literacy Center
- Drake University Headstart
- Dress For Success - DM
- Dorothy's House
- EDGE
- Elim Christian Fellowship
- EMBARC
- El Comunicador
- Easter Seals
- Early Grade Reading Advisory Council
- Eat Greater Des Moines
- Employee & Family Resources
- Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families
- Evelyn Davis Early Learning Academy
- Every Child Matters in Iowa
- Everybody Wins! Iowa
- FamilyWize
- FBL Financial Group, Inc.
- Fidelity & Guaranty Life
- Financial Capability Network
- Food Bank of Iowa
- Gateway to College
- Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa
- Goodwill Industries
- Grandview University
- Greater Des Moines Partnership
- Habitat for Humanity
- HCI Care Services/ VNS of Iowa
- Healthy Homes Des Moines
- Heartland Area Education Agency
- Helping Hands Pantry
- HIRTA Public Transit
- Hawthorn Hill
- Hispanic Educational Resources
- Home, Inc.
- House of Mercy
- Hunger Free Polk
- IMPACT Community Action Partnership
- ICC-Solidarity Microfinance
- I Have A Dream Foundation
- ISU Extension and Outreach Polk Co.
- ISU Extension and Outreach-Community and Economic Development
- Iowa ACEs 360
- Iowa Afterschool Alliance
- Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children
- Iowa Bystander
- Iowa Central Community College
- Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
- Iowa College Student Aid Commission
- Iowa Community Action Association
- Iowa Credit Union Foundation
- Iowa Department of Corrections
- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Center for Economic Success
- Iowa Homeless Youth Centers
- Iowa International Center
- Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates
- Iowa Justice for our Neighbors
- Iowa Legal Aid
- Iowa Sports Foundation
- Iowa State Education Association (ISEA)
- Iowa Workforce Development
- Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Service
- Isiserettes Drum Corp
- Job Honor
- Joppa
- Jewish Family Services
- John Grubb YMCA
- John Deere Foundation
- Karen Association of Iowa
- Kia of Des Moines
- Kirkwood Community College
- KPMG

- Latino Forum
- Link Associates
- Links Incorporated (Des Moines Chapter)
- Lutheran Church of Hope
- Lutheran Services of Iowa
- ManUp Iowa
- Meals from the Heartland
- Meredith Corporation
- Mid Iowa Health Foundation
- Mid-Iowa Council, Boy Scouts of America
- NAACP Des Moines Branch
- Nationwide
- New Opportunities Inc.
- Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)
- Oakridge Neighborhood Services
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.
- Opportunity Iowa
- Orchard Place
- Paramount Lodging Advisors
- P4C, Professionals for Charity
- PCHTF- Healthy Homes East Bank
- Perry Child Development Center
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc.
- Plymouth Church Board of Christian Social Action
- Prevent Child Abuse Iowa
- Prelude Iowa
- Polk County Continuum of Care
- Polk County Early Childhood Iowa
- Polk County Family and Youth Services
- Polk County Health Dept.
- Polk County Housing Trust Fund
- Primary Health Care Inc.
- Principal
- Project Iowa
- Rebuilding Together
- Refugee Planning Alliance
- Responsible Education and Development (READ)
- Sankofa Urban Farms
- Simpson College
- Skills 2 Compete Coalition
- South Central Iowa Federation Labor
- State Public Policy Group
- School Administrators of Iowa
- Tomorrow Plan
- Toyota of Des Moines
- Transformations Group
- Trinity United Methodist Church
- United Way of Central Iowa
- Unity HealthCare
- Urban Dreams
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Des Moines Field Office
- Viva East Bank!
- VITA
- Voices to be Heard
- WeLift
- Wells Fargo Bank
- Wesley Life
- West Des Moines Human Services
- West Des Moines Community School District
- Wilkie House
- YESS
- YMCA of Greater Des Moines
- Young Women's Resource Center
- Youth Build
- Youth Justice Initiative of West Des Moines
- Youth Policy Institute of Iowa
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc.

## OpportUNITY Leadership Roundtable

Glennnda Bivens  
*Iowa State University  
Extension*

Mary Bontrager  
*Greater Des Moines  
Partnership*

Barb Bremner  
*Polk County Early  
Childhood Iowa*

Robert Brownell  
*Polk County*

Elisabeth Buck  
*United Way of Central Iowa*

Eric Burmeister  
*Polk County Housing Trust Fund*

Teree Caldwell Johnson  
*Oakridge Neighborhood  
Services*

Marvin DeJear  
*Evelyn K. Davis Center for  
Working Families*

Angie Dethlefs-Trettin  
*Community Foundation of  
Greater Des Moines*

Gennis Groenenboom  
*Iowa Legal Aid*

Amber Lynch  
*Viva Eastbank!*

Tom Narak  
*School Administrators of Iowa*

Vinh Nguyen  
*Des Moines Public Schools*

Mark Phillips  
*Polk County Continuum  
of Care Board*

Elizabeth Presutti  
*DART*

Sarai Schnucker Rice  
*DMARC*

Carly Ross  
*U.S. Committee for Refugees  
and Immigrants*

Kris Schechinger  
*Nationwide*

Phyllis Staplin  
*Community*

Kanisha Tillman  
*Community - Lived Experience*

Connie Welcher  
*Iowa Home Care/  
Lived Experience (Consulting)*

United Way of Central Iowa Staff  
Corinne Lambert  
Helene Grossman  
Jody Kanne  
Kwadjo Tillman  
Renee Miller



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