

FIGHTING POVERTY TOGETHER

OpportUNITY Plan



OPPORTUNITY
FIGHTING POVERTY TOGETHER



ELISABETH BUCK

*President,
United Way of Central Iowa*

Students graduate high school with a dream and a path to achieve it. Parents choose a caretaker for their children who they trust and can access. Workers get the skills to advance in their careers, and the unemployed have a chance to find good-paying jobs. Families return home to a warm meal.

This was our vision when we began OpportUNITY four years ago.

As central Iowa receives accolades for being a great community, many central Iowans are struggling to survive. We came together to acknowledge this problem, and from those discussions, our community developed the OpportUNITY Plan.



TEREE CALDWELL-JOHNSON

*CEO,
Oakridge Neighborhood Services*

Today, we are beginning to see progress due to our collective efforts. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, the number of central Iowans who are financially self-sufficient increased to 65.9% in 2016 from 65.2% in the previous year. This may seem like a small increase, but it means 11,003 more central Iowans are earning enough to cover their basic needs, beginning to build assets, and thriving in their lives.

OpportUNITY is the work of hundreds of central Iowans uniting to fight poverty through work groups, collaborative learning, and grassroots advocacy. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations who have given—and continue to give—their time, voices, and resources to this fight.



ANGELA DETHLEFS-TRETTIN

*Chief Community
Impact Officer,
Community Foundation of
Greater Des Moines*

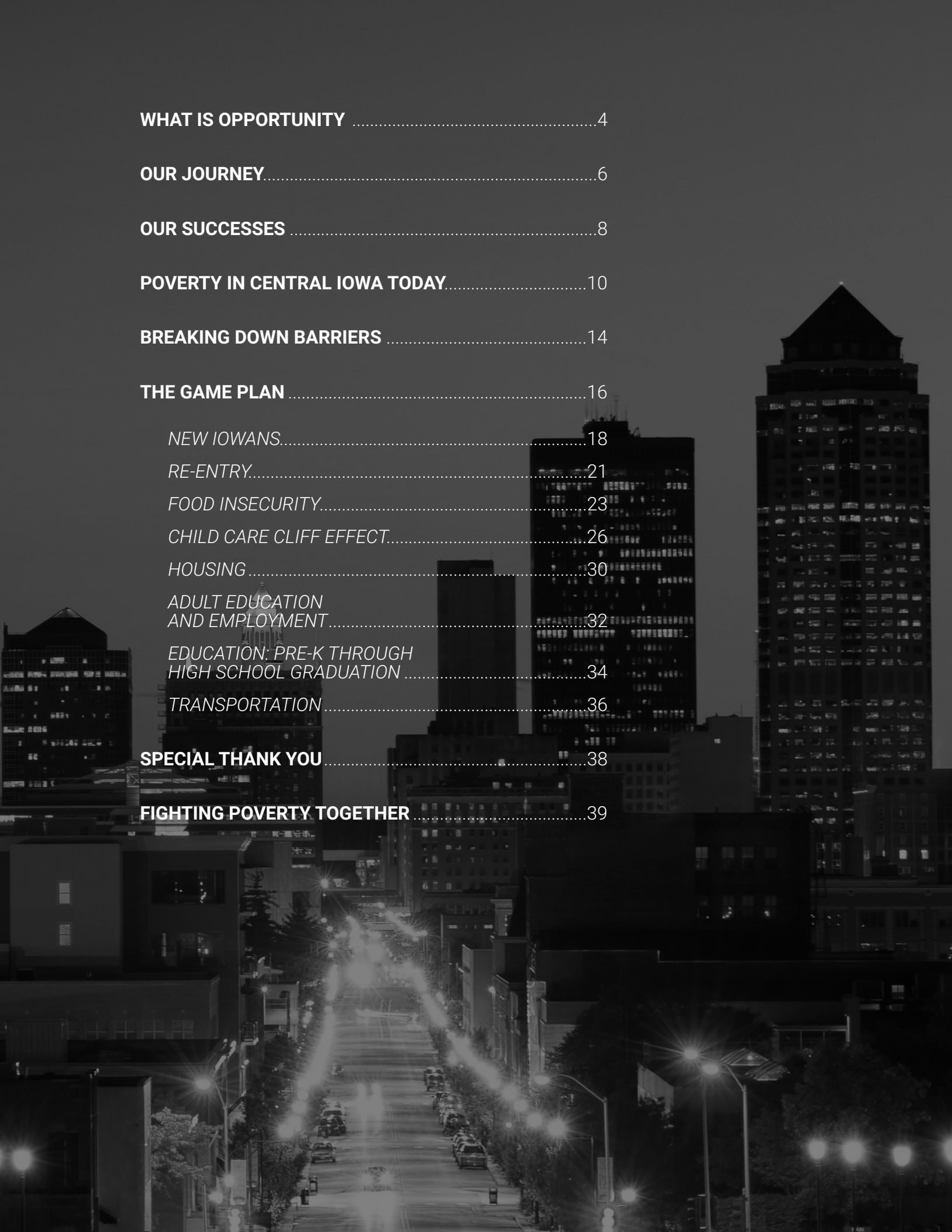
Moving forward, we will engage more community members, elected officials, and businesses in our work. We will also invite more individuals who are experiencing poverty into the conversation so they can tell their stories and craft solutions that work for the reality of their lives. Our work will continue beyond just the city of Des Moines, as we see poverty rising quickly in suburban and rural areas.

We hope that all of you who read this plan find your place in this movement and join the fight for a stronger central Iowa for everyone. To live better, we must LIVE UNITED.

Elisabeth Buck

Tere Caldwell-Johnson

Angela N. Dethlefs-Trettin



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WHAT IS OPPORTUNITY?

Stephen is 27 months sober and has decided to enroll in college classes. He volunteers at Urban Dreams while recovering from an injury he sustained at his job.

OpportUNITY unites central Iowa to fight poverty together.

WE ARE DRIVEN BY THE BELIEF THAT:

1. **Poverty and barriers to financial stability prevent central Iowans from thriving in our community.**
2. **We can, through our collective action, eliminate these barriers and reduce poverty.**
3. **Change cannot happen without ALL OF US. We need you to advocate, educate, participate, and communicate.**

Since OpportUNITY began in 2014, every plan, action, success, and challenge has been collaborative.

Small changes lead to long-term transformation. It starts with dedicated work groups focused on tackling specific barriers to poverty—and all of us doing our part!

Join us in the fight against poverty:

- **Talk about poverty with your friends and family.** We must agree as a community that poverty is an important issue that we need to come together to address.
- **Meet with your local elected officials.** The greatest change can happen on the local level. Take time to educate your local elected officials and build a relationship with them.
- **Join a work group.** Visit opportunitydsm.org or our Facebook page (@opportunitydsm) to learn about the issues our work groups and subgroups are tackling (see pages 18-37).
- **Volunteer to fight poverty.** Central Iowa has many volunteer options that directly impact the work of OpportUNITY. Learn about volunteer opportunities at unitedwaydm.org/volunteer.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

To reach our goal of reducing poverty, we use a collective impact model built on five interconnected components proven to lead to large-scale results:

- **Common agenda:** A shared vision for change
- **Shared measurement:** Agreement on how success will be measured and reported
- **Mutually reinforcing activities:** Diverse stakeholders across sectors
- **Continual communication:** All players engage in frequent, structured, and open communication
- **Backbone support:** Independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative of community improvement



OPPORTUNITY
FIGHTING POVERTY TOGETHER



OUR JOURNEY

Fadia, a Syrian refugee, is raising four children in Waukee. After recovering from treatment for tumors, she earned her driver's license and is working toward opening a business.



OpportUNITY began as a community vision to improve the lives of central lowans living in poverty.



We UNITE

In June 2014, more than 100 community members came together at a summit to learn about central Iowa's strengths and the struggles of those living in poverty. The group represented four sectors in equal number: business leaders and philanthropists, government and school leaders, nonprofit and faith leaders, and community members who have lived with the stresses of poverty.

We engaged a lived-experience group, which 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 challenges of living in poverty.



We STRATEGIZE

After the summit, a Leadership Roundtable of 14 members representing the four sectors formed and met every other week to learn about poverty and develop a plan to reduce it in our community. Organizations shared their insights and initiatives. A group of 46 community members representing the four sectors engaged 184 individuals in Listening and Learning Sessions to understand:

- What kind of life do people in poverty want to live?
- What is helping to create that life?
- What is getting in the way of creating that life?
- What would most help people to get out of poverty?

This input was used at the second summit where more than 120 community members reviewed, revised, and committed to a draft of the OpportUNITY Plan. Since then, more than 2,000 individuals from all walks of life and across central Iowa have signed on to support the community plan.

We TACKLE

Many of those who attended the summits, as well as other stakeholders in the community, joined work group meetings for each priority area of the plan and provided additional input into the action steps needed to meet targeted performance measures. The final draft of the OpportUNITY Plan reflected the work most crucial to making progress in an 18-month period.



The work groups continue to meet regularly to implement the action steps needed to meet established goals in each area. Each work group has identified the most effective ways to approach their work, including collaborating with other community groups, revising goals and action steps to address evolving community needs, and forming subgroups to better manage workloads.

We EVALUATE

Along the way, we are evaluating our work to keep moving toward success. This plan is our renewed commitment to achieving our vision. We have laid the groundwork for the next 2-3 years that will drive our collective efforts.



The plan presented here will give us a clear vision for how we continue to lead the fight toward our goal so that all central lowans can thrive.

A BACKBONE OF SUPPORT

United Way of Central Iowa provides the backbone support for OpportUNITY's efforts as a key component of the collective impact model. United Way staff members work to raise awareness of poverty and engage community members in Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties. Staff help eight work groups implement action plans and lead advocacy efforts with more than 2,000 individuals signed on in support of OpportUNITY. In addition, several United Way staff provide expertise and leadership in work groups, as well as communications and administrative support alongside many dedicated stakeholders.



**United Way
of Central Iowa**



OUR SUCCESSSES

Cecelia became pregnant at age 16 and dropped out of school. She re-enrolled a year later and graduated in May 2018.



The goal of OpportUNITY is to increase the percentage of central Iowans who are financially self-sufficient to 75%.

If central Iowa's population remained the same, 52,030 more people would have had to become financially self-sufficient this year to reach the community Income Goal for 2020 of 75%.¹

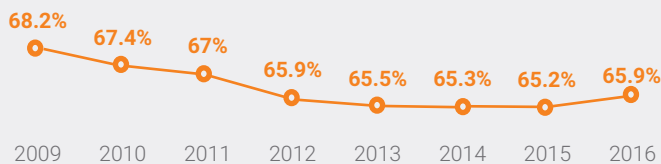
We are making progress

The percentage of families in Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties who are financially self-sufficient increased to 65.9% in 2016 from 65.2% in the previous year, according to the latest U.S. Census data.² This gain means more central Iowans can pay for basic needs and begin to build assets and thrive. It's the first increase central Iowa has seen since 2012.

In 2016, 11,003 more central Iowans were thriving than the year before.

PERCENT OF CENTRAL IOWANS WHO ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT

250% of the federal poverty level;
minimal public assistance or family support needed



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties (2012-2016)

U.S. Census data also showed:

- 1,265 fewer individuals were living below 100% of poverty, a change to 11.1% of the population from 11.5% in the previous year.
- 355 fewer individuals were living between 100%-184% of poverty, a change to 12.3% from 12.6%.
- 1,264 more individuals were living between 185%-249% of poverty, which has not changed from 10.6% of the population.³

View chart on page 11 for more details.

We attribute these positive changes to our community's commitment and collaborative work to tackle the critical issues that cause people to live in poverty.

While we have experienced successes and frustrations since OpportUNITY began in June 2014, the number of individuals and organizations invested in fighting poverty continues to grow, and progress is being made through small actions that have a huge impact on central Iowans.

For example:

- Three new mobile food pantries were launched in Polk and Dallas Counties to increase access to food through the actions of the Food Insecurity work group.
- In 2018, through advocacy efforts, \$7.6 million was added to the state budget to expand Child Care Assistance to working families who faced the loss of benefits with a small increase in pay.
- The Iowa Legislature repealed a law that automatically revoked driver's licenses of non-driving drug offenders. This removed a huge barrier for citizens returning from prison.

View additional successes in each of the work group plans on pages 18-37.

WHAT MAKES US PROUD OF CENTRAL IOWA?

Greater Des Moines (DSM) is receiving top rankings in many categories, recognizing our community's many strengths as a region. Here are some of the latest accolades:

- #1 State in the Country – U.S. News & World Report, 2018
- #1 Best Place for Millennials to Live in the Midwest – Growella, 2017
- #1 Best Affordable Place to Live in the U.S. – U.S. News & World Report, 2017
- #3 Best Place to Live with a Low Cost of Living – Business Insider, 2017
- #3 Most Popular City for Millennial Homebuyers – LendingTree, 2017

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most-recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties (2012-2016)

² See above.

³ See above.



POVERTY IN CENTRAL IOWA TODAY

Kati was released from prison in January 2017. She experienced barriers in finding employment because of her criminal background but has recently found full-time employment.



What is poverty?

United Way of Central Iowa defines poverty as less than 250% of the federal poverty level. Above 250%, families can afford what is necessary to survive in modern society, including rent, utilities, food, child care, health care, transportation, clothing, and household essentials. Above this level, individuals can begin to thrive by saving, paying loans, covering education expenses, and affording children's activities, entertainment, or a vacation.⁴

Individuals living below 250% of the federal poverty level fall into a range of poverty from extremely poor to poor/low income. The chart below explains this range.⁵

The working poor

Most central Iowans living in poverty are employed. They go to work each day, pay taxes, struggle to make ends meet, live paycheck to paycheck, and are one health care emergency or one flat tire away from serious financial crisis.

The working poor, or ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) households, fall within the very poor/low income to poor/low income categories. In central Iowa, 29.7% (69,392) of households struggle to afford the basic necessities and live below the ALICE threshold, according to a 2016 United Ways of Iowa report. That is nearly 1 in 3 households in our community.⁶

POVERTY IN CENTRAL IOWA			
EXTREMELY POOR	VERY POOR/ LOW INCOME	POOR/ LOW INCOME	SELF-SUFFICIENT
Less than 100% of the federal poverty level	100%-184% of the federal poverty level 30% of Area Median Income	185%-249% of the federal poverty level 50% of Area Median Income	250% and above the federal poverty level 80% of Area Median Income
Struggling or unable to afford basic needs including food, housing, clothing, transportation, health care	Likely employed but income doesn't cover the basic household needs and often public assistance support is required	Likely employed with a higher wage but income does not cover all the basic household needs; public assistance is not available	Reached economic success; no longer need public assistance or family support
WORKING POOR Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE)			
Central Iowa population: 11.1%	Central Iowa population: 12.3%	Central Iowa population: 10.6%	Central Iowa population: 65.9%
Annual income for a family of four: Less than \$25,100	Annual income for a family of four: \$25,100 to \$46,435	Annual income for a family of four: \$46,435 to \$62,750	Annual income for a family of four: Above \$62,750
34% OF THE CENTRAL IOWA POPULATION⁷			

⁴Iowa Policy Project Report

⁵U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most-recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties (2012-2016)

⁶ALICE Report for Iowa, 2018

⁷U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most-recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties (2012-2016)

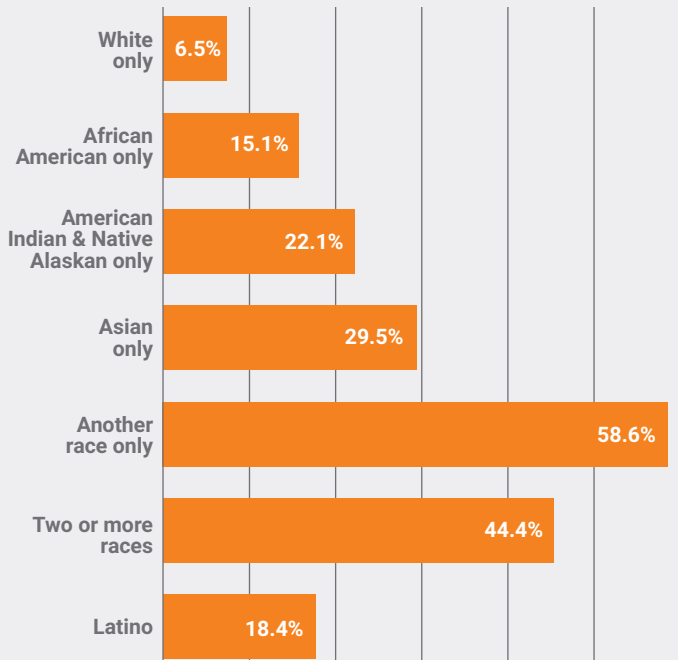


POVERTY IN CENTRAL IOWA TODAY

Central Iowa is growing

Since 2011, central Iowa's population has increased 9.3%, by nearly 50,000 people, accounting for 61% of Iowa's total population growth. Central Iowa is also home to an increasingly diverse population, as seen in the graph below.⁸

CENTRAL IOWA GROWTH IN POPULATION: 2011-2016



African Americans and Africans comprise 3.4% of Iowa's population, 6.7% of Polk County's population, and nearly 11% of the city of Des Moines' population.⁹

182,606 people of Latino origin live in Iowa, making up Iowa's largest race or ethnic minority. The Latino population has grown 121.4%, or by 100,133 individuals, over the past decade. Latinos make up 5.8% of Iowa's population today and are expected to make up 12.8% of Iowa's population by 2050, with a population growth of 439,414 individuals.¹⁰

Poverty and disparity

OpportUNITY's goal is to reduce poverty for everyone. To get there, we must consider disparities among demographic groups and address those differences to improve living conditions for ALL central Iowans. As the population of central Iowa changes and some groups continue to grow, we must recognize disparities and strive for self-sufficiency for all groups.

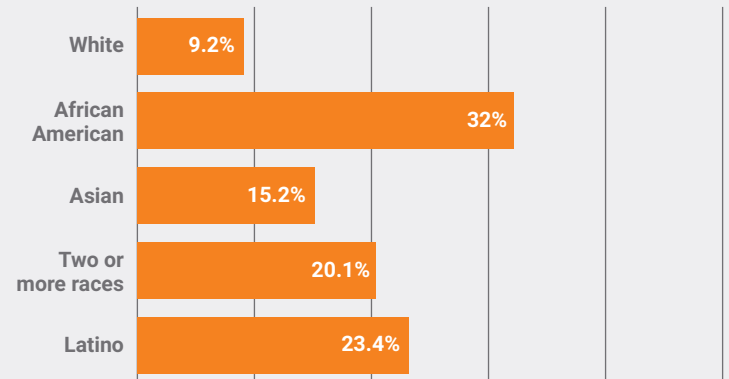
Disparity by race

11.1% (63,798 individuals of all races) live below 100% of poverty in Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties. Looking more closely at populations living below 100% of poverty in central Iowa: 32% of African Americans, 23.4% of Latinos, and 20.1% of people identifying as two or more races live below 100% of poverty, compared with 9.2% of whites. (Learn more about the percentage living in poverty on page 11.)

NOTE: The following section includes information from the April 2017 report, One Economy, which addresses the state of Black Polk County. For the full report, go to: www.aalfdsm.org/oneeconomy

The One Economy report examines the "historical racial wealth divide between Whites and African Americans in Polk County" and African immigrants' desire to make their home here and to have "lives of safety, stability, and deep connection."

CENTRAL IOWANS LIVING AT 100% POVERTY OR LESS: BY RACE (2011-2016 AVERAGE)



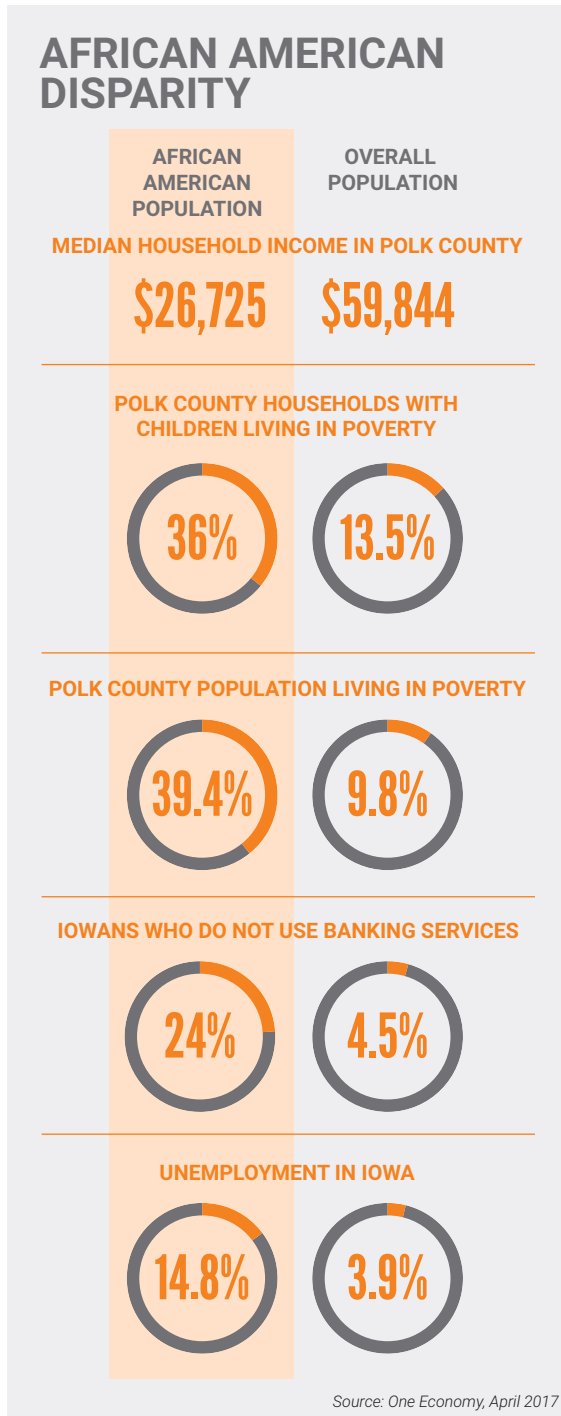
⁸U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most-recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties (2012-2016)

⁹One Economy, April 2017

¹⁰Latinos in Iowa, Office of Latino Affairs, 2017



The One Economy report includes this disturbing statement: "We live in a community that touts its livability for young professionals and retirees alike, yet landed at #3 of the Worst Cities for African Americans just this year... Even with this richness in culture and community, Black Polk County faces real challenges. As revealed in the guided discussions with community members, across age, gender, income, and educational attainment, people are hurting."

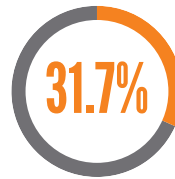


Disparity by gender and family structure

More females, and especially single mothers, live in poverty compared with males, according to census data.



12.4% of females in central Iowa live below 100% of poverty, compared with 9.8% of males.



31.7% of families led by single mothers lived below 100% poverty in 2016, compared with 21% of single-father families.



36% of Des Moines' urban core population was extremely poor females, while 30% was extremely poor males.

In 2016, there was some improvement:

- 266 fewer married couples with children lived below poverty, a change to 4.6% from 5.1% in 2011.
- 49 fewer single fathers with children lived below poverty, a change to 21% from 21.7% in 2011.
- 149 fewer single mothers with children lived below 100% of poverty, a change to 31.7% from 33.9% in 2011.

Disparity by age

While the number of children and working-age people living in poverty decreased in 2016, the number of seniors living in poverty increased.

- 30,839 children under 18 years old lived below 100% of poverty in 2016. 804 fewer children lived below 100% of poverty, a change to 14.9% of this population from 15.7% in 2011.
- 978 fewer working-age people, ages 18-64, were living below 100% poverty in 2016, a change to 10.3% in 2016 from 10.7% in 2011.
- 571 more seniors (ages 65 and older) were living below 100% of poverty in 2016, a change to 7.0% from 6.5% of the population in 2011.



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

After earning his high school equivalency diploma through Bridges to Success, Maurice is working full time as a truck driver and taking college classes.



Reducing poverty begins by working on many complex barriers that impact people in poverty.

Much of the OpportUNITY Plan is divided into work groups that are leading actions on specific issues. Collectively, all of the work can reduce poverty in central Iowa. Here are some specific areas we need to address:

Essential needs

By increasing access to essential needs, including food and housing, families will have a stronger foundation to succeed in school and work, and to build community connections. Among the challenges we need to address:

- Affordable housing: Des Moines and West Des Moines lost 2,536 rental units at the rate of \$650 or less per month from 2006 to 2016.¹¹
- Nearly 22% of Polk County households were food insecure at some point during 2016.¹²

Children in poverty

Children living in low-income families and neighborhoods have poorer health outcomes that can affect them throughout their lives. Poverty also impacts their ability to succeed in school and in life.

By age 4, low-income children hear 30 million fewer words than their affluent peers.¹³ 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, which can lead to lower academic achievement and make them less likely to graduate.¹⁴

High school teens who drop out are more likely than those who graduate to be arrested or have a child while still a teenager, leading to additional financial and social costs.^{15, 16}

Our work takes into account the need for a two-generational approach, working with adults and children at the same time to address barriers that prevent the entire family's success. It also means that, if we can help parents achieve financial stability, we are increasing the chances of a better future for the next generation.

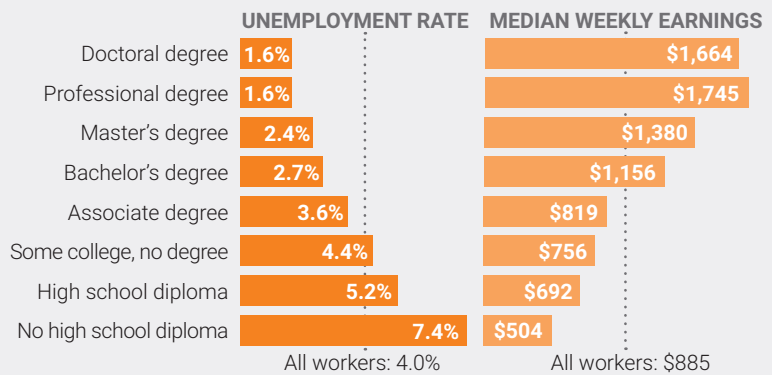
Credentials for better jobs

One sign of improvement in central Iowa: More students are graduating from high school and gaining the education and credentials for better jobs, a key to financial stability.

The rate of students graduating within five years in central Iowa is 93.6%—a significant increase from 83.4% in 2008.¹⁷ The latest U.S. Census data also shows:

- Individuals with some college and/or associate degree increased by 2,293 people in one year.¹⁷
- Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 2,739 in one year.¹⁷

THE LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND INCOME



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

We can do more to support central Iowans in obtaining their equivalency diplomas. 8% of central Iowa adults, or 35,000 individuals, do not have a high school diploma or equivalency, causing them to be economically disadvantaged, because most jobs require at least a diploma to apply.¹⁸

More than 23% of people without a high school diploma live below the poverty line.¹⁸

Iowa's employers are looking for skilled workers. 55% of all jobs in central Iowa require some postsecondary education up to an associate degree, and only 32% of the workforce has the right skills and credentials for these jobs.¹⁸ We have an opportunity to better connect employer needs with job seekers' skills and to consider strategies that increase individuals' access to "good jobs," or jobs that pay at least a living wage, offer benefits, have set schedules, provide a sense of purpose, or offer a long term career path, among other factors.

¹¹Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University

¹²Des Moines University Food Insecurity Survey, 2016

¹³Campaign for Grade Level Reading

¹⁴Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success, 2014

¹⁵National Dropout Prevention Center, 2018

¹⁶The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012

¹⁷Iowa Dept. of Education

¹⁸U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most-recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties (2012-2016)

¹⁹Advocacy Agenda Building on Smart Investments in Iowa's Workforce and Industries, 2018



THE GAME PLAN

Augustine is going into 7th grade. He spends time after school at Children and Family Urban Movement (CFUM), a nonprofit that supports children and families in Des Moines.



Poverty is complex, and there is no single solution.

OpportUNITY tackles barriers and addresses systemic issues that get in the way of central Iowans meeting their basic needs and, ultimately, achieving self-sufficiency.

The progress we've made toward our goals is the result of our collective work through eight work groups (right) formed following the launch of the first OpportUNITY Plan in 2014. Work groups continue to meet regularly to learn about their topic and to take action to meet specific goals. Since forming in 2014, some groups have restructured into subgroups and some have redefined their work. Others have merged with other groups in the community in order to avoid duplicating efforts and to make the greatest impact. The results are streamlined and effective groups with clear direction and focused efforts.

In addition to working in these specific areas, we are reducing poverty by raising awareness, collecting data, and sharing and utilizing information about solutions. We are still working toward increasing coordinated alignment of programs, plans, efforts, and resources, while identifying gaps in our work.

The Work Groups

On the following pages are summaries of the work groups' results and actions as we move forward in implementing the OpportUNITY Plan. The first phase includes the goals that were identified when the work groups initially formed. The results describe the accomplishments and challenges of the first phase.

After 18 months, the work groups reviewed their results and, in the second phase, set new goals and action steps to continue to address issues or move on to new issues or concerns in our community related to their focus area.

All individuals are invited to participate in an OpportUNITY work group. The only requirement is a dedication to create change in our community. Work groups are bonded by their desire to strengthen our community and a passion to help people while holding one another accountable to ensure that the work is accomplished. Each month our work groups and their subgroups find ways to educate, advocate, participate, and communicate for change in our community.

WORK GROUPS



NEW IOWANS



RE-ENTRY



FOOD INSECURITY



CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT



HOUSING



ADULT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



EDUCATION: PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION



TRANSPORTATION

TARA

Occupation: Studying to be a nurse

Came to the U.S. at age 19 from a Nepalese refugee camp



NEW IOWANS

OVERVIEW

The New Iowans work group focuses on changing systems to address poverty faced by newcomers to our country, including refugees and immigrants. Many members of this work group are also involved with RACI (Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa) and bring personal experience as a newcomer or experience working with New Iowans through their organizations. The common thread for this group is a desire to improve the lives of New Iowans by removing barriers to earning a living wage to support their families. This work group seeks to coordinate efforts to be more effective and efficient in providing support to newcomers, while enhancing their ability to be recognized as productive members of the central Iowa community. We also strive to collect helpful data for our efforts and make connections to community-based ethnic groups and nonprofits working to help refugees and immigrants.

OBJECTIVES

Whether Iowa is 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. Refugees and immigrants, including those for whom status is not clear, face challenges that prevent them from moving out of poverty. Many of these challenges are being addressed by other OpportUNITY work groups—housing, food insecurity, transportation, lack of education, and job training. In addition, many New Iowans face prejudice, racism, limited support upon arrival, and difficulty finding employment because they lack education or struggle with English-language skills.

NEARLY 5.4 PERCENT OF IOWA RESIDENTS ARE IMMIGRANTS.

Source: ACS 5 year estimates, 2012-2016



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Increase the diversity of the individuals involved in implementing action steps for New Iowans.	■ Involved bilingual community members who represent New Iowans in this work.
2. Address the needs of Dallas and Warren Counties.	■ Held a meeting in Dallas County to learn about the specific needs of New Iowans in that county and to increase communication. ■ Collected and reviewed data for Dallas and Warren Counties that may connect to work with New Iowans.
3. Increase the community's coordination efforts to support New Iowans by 50% as indicated on a survey of program leaders.	■ Held a summit on refugee issues and their struggles and opportunities in central Iowa for educators, employers, nonprofit staff, and community. ■ Held a daylong summit for the refugee community to offer health screenings, along with information about employment and education opportunities, networking, and resources. ■ Surveyed the community through listening and learning conversations to collect data. ■ Collaborated with DART and regional transportation providers to address barriers New Iowans face with using public transportation.
4. Increase the quality and accessibility of English as Second Language opportunities for adults in central Iowa with consideration for how language progresses (listening, speaking, reading, writing).	■ Collaborated with local ESL providers to develop a standards-based ESL teacher academy to increase teacher skills, which led to implementing a Train-the-Trainer model and follow-up. ■ Defended state funding for community-based ESL programs.
5. Increase the percentage of New Iowans in central Iowa with a high school equivalency diploma to 8% (from 3%).	■ Transitioned this goal to the Bridges to Success initiative.
6. Make Iowa a welcoming community for refugees and immigrants through community efforts, including employer-led projects and nonprofit programs.	■ Transitioned this goal to various community efforts.



NEW IOWANS

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
<p>1. Address housing needs for refugees and immigrants.</p> <p>1a. Address New lowans' barriers to housing stability by creating resources to enhance tenant/landlord communication and increase New lowan housing navigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Formed a subgroup between the New lowans work group and the Housing work group to create a translation tool to help landlords and tenants better communicate to avoid problems.■ Develop interpreter hotline, magnet, and translation stickers.■ Pilot toolkit to 3-4 landlords and collect feedback.■ Finalize housing navigator proposal and submit funding request(s).
<p>2. Support developing and marketing pre-apprenticeships and career pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The Pre-Apprenticeship Strategic Team (PAST) will analyze the feasibility and utility of a pre-apprenticeship program to help New lowans explore and connect to career-track jobs with progression, including industry-recognized, portable credentials.■ Identify any interim credentials New lowans lack that are required by Iowa apprenticeships, identify strategies for New lowans to attain those interim credentials, and determine how best to coordinate with Iowa's apprenticeships to improve New lowan candidates' access.■ From the analysis, determine the resources needed to give New lowans the skills and credentials they need to access career-track jobs.
<p>3. Address the health/mental health issues faced by refugees and immigrants.</p> <p>3a. Update list of bilingual/culturally sensitive mental health and health care providers.</p> <p>3b. Develop training to help New lowans cope with everyday stressors.</p> <p>3c. Train interpreters on mental health/health concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Formed subgroups to work on this issue.■ Reach out to communities via churches, etc., to find champions/leaders.■ Create document or website that can easily be updated.■ Develop mental health first aid trainings.■ Hold community trainings.■ Find champions/leaders in each ethnic community.■ Meet with Polk County Crisis and Advocacy Center to develop stressors training for New lowans.■ Offer mental health first aid training to leaders and champions.■ Present stressor training to each ethnic community.■ Set up meeting with DMACC interpreter program to incorporate health and mental health training into curriculum or CEUs.■ Discuss with DMACC Interpreter staff/medical assistant program to see if there is a medical terminology course to add to program.■ Start training for DMACC Interpreter Board – mental health first aid.■ Add medical terminology class to interpreter curriculum or CEUs.

IVY

Occupation: Works at Bridgestone Firestone

Received training in prison through Central Iowa Works



RE-ENTRY

OVERVIEW

Every year, more than 5,000 citizens return to neighborhoods across Iowa after serving time in state prisons. When we support returning citizens, we have an opportunity to turn around a life, avoid future victims, repair a family, and support a community.

To ensure that returning citizens have a successful transition back to our community, this work group is addressing their multiple needs, including:

- Housing
- Employment
- Mental health services
- Access to government assistance
- Community-based organizational involvement and support

OBJECTIVES

Formerly incarcerated prisoners face challenges at every level. A person may successfully re-enter society by meeting six basic life needs: (1) livelihood, (2) residence, (3) family, (4) health, (5) criminal justice compliance, and (6) social connections. Attaining each of these basic life needs presents unique challenges, many of which are interconnected.

INCARCERATION: BY THE NUMBERS

- 70 percent of children with an incarcerated parent will follow in their footsteps.²⁰
- In 1972, fewer than 350,000 people were being held in prisons and jails nationwide. Today, more than 2 million are being held.²¹
- Each person who is incarcerated costs the American taxpayer an average of \$31,000 a year.²²
- African Americans are nearly six times more likely and Latinos are nearly twice as likely to be incarcerated than white Americans.²³
- One year after release, up to 60 percent of people convicted of a crime are not employed, according to the National Institute of Justice.²⁴
- More than two-thirds of those released from state and federal prison will be re-arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within three years.²⁵
- Approximately 5,000 men and women are released from Iowa prisons each year.²⁶
- 85 percent of adults who reported growing up with an incarcerated family member experienced other types of childhood trauma.²⁷

²⁰Incarcerated—Children of Parents in Prison Impacted, 2008

²¹The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, 2010

²²The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers, 2012

²³Uneven Justice: States Rates of Incarceration by Race and Ethnicity, 2007

²⁴When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Re-entry, 2005

²⁵H.R. 1593—110th Congress: Second Chance Act of 2007

²⁶Iowa Department of Corrections, Prison Trends: Major Reports, 2015

²⁷Beyond ACEs: Building Hope & Resiliency in Iowa, 2016



RE-ENTRY

FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convene a task force to coordinate efforts to support the transition for returning citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Convened a first-of-its-kind Re-entry Task Force focused on a coordinated system to help returning citizens more effectively transition back to the community.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Disseminate and implement the Re-entry Simulation to raise community awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hosted Re-entry Simulations that reached more than 300 people, helping them better understand the issues and barriers in our community for formerly incarcerated individuals.

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support expanding educational opportunities for returning citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop strategic plan for community education. ■ Increase training opportunities for individuals while incarcerated. ■ Bring the Offender Workforce Development Specialist training to Iowa.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Research and implement strategies to build employment opportunities for returning citizens and increase employer awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase entrepreneurship for returning citizens. ■ Work with employers to Ban the Box, background checks, and other barriers to employment. ■ Develop a multiorganizational, collaborative training center. ■ Increase employer awareness and engagement to value hiring returning citizens.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Investigate housing issues related to returning citizens and strategize to expand housing options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collect information on housing barriers that returning citizens experience, while taking inventory of current housing options for returning citizens. ■ Increase housing available for returning citizens. ■ Create/find affordable housing assigned to returning citizens. ■ Identify and decrease barriers to housing. ■ Review practices regarding Fair Housing for Ex-Offenders.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Build opportunities to fulfill the needs of returning citizens for social connectedness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further develop mentoring program and increase returning citizens' participation. ■ Help incarcerated parents with placing of their children while in prison and help reunite ex-offenders with their children after incarceration.



FOOD INSECURITY

OVERVIEW

For families to thrive in our community, everyone needs access to affordable and nutritious food. The Food Insecurity work group's focus is to increase awareness of and access to resources and programs that address food insecurity in central Iowa. Success in reducing and, ultimately, eliminating food insecurity in our community depends on decreasing poverty and the many barriers to self-sufficiency that exist for a large percentage of our population.

KEY PROGRAMS:

- **SNAP** – The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities.
- **WIC** – Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) is a supplemental nutrition program for babies, children under the age of 5, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and women who have had a baby in the past 6 months.
- **Double Up Food Bucks** – The program matches the value of SNAP purchases made at participating farmers markets to spend on fresh, locally grown produce.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Food Insecurity work group is to increase resources for and access to food and develop new and innovative approaches to addressing food insecurity and hunger in central Iowa. The community must have a variety of access points, including food pantries, meal sites, mobile pantries, food deliveries, food rescue, SNAP, WIC, and Double Up Food Bucks to increase opportunities for low-income central Iowans to access food.

Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty. By addressing it, we can reduce stress, improve health, and provide the building blocks of a successful life for families in our community. Strategies must incorporate increasing awareness of available services and their benefits, addressing challenges to accessing food for special populations (e.g., seniors and refugees), and improving data collection practices across Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties.

NEARLY 22% OF POLK COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS WERE FOOD INSECURE AT SOME TIME DURING 2016.

Source: Des Moines University Food Insecurity Survey, 2016



FOOD INSECURITY

FOOD INSECURITY VERSUS HUNGER

To address food insecurity, we must understand the definitions:

Food insecurity – When family members are concerned about where their groceries and meals will come from and how they will pay for them. In order to prevent anyone in the household from going hungry, the family may purchase lower-quality, less expensive, and less healthy food for the family.

Nearly 20 percent of central Iowans are food insecure.

Hunger – When family members eat less food, repeatedly experiencing the physical sensation of hunger.

Nearly 5 percent, or 28,000 central Iowans, are hungry. More than half of them are children.

Source: Des Moines University Food Insecurity Survey, 2016

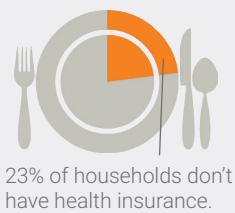
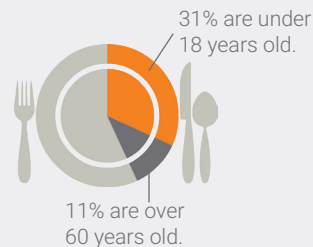
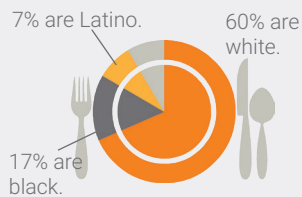
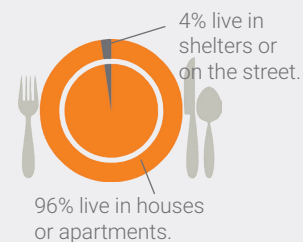
FIRST-PHASE GOALS

RESULTS

1. Collect and disseminate accurate data about food insecurity and hunger in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented a centralized, web-based data system for all DMARC food pantries. Conducted the first local survey on the number of food-insecure and hungry individuals in Polk, Warren, and Dallas Counties.
2. Increase the number of people who visit pantries, community meal sites, and summer meal sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased the number of individuals accessing meal sites during the summer by 9.03% from 2016 to 2017, which exceeds the statewide increase of 5.3%.
3. Raise awareness about food issues in our community by convening individuals and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted a summit with over 150 participants.
4. Build partnerships in the three-county area to address food insecurity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased partnerships to address food insecurity through Hunger Free Dallas and Hunger Free Polk.

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.





SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
1. Eliminate hunger in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties. 1a. Increase the number of people who visit pantries, community meal sites, and summer meal sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Extend times summer meal sites are open.■ Re-evaluate and expand the number of summer meal sites; develop a communications plan to increase participation.■ Add more pantries; community meal sites; summer sites in schools, parks, and nonprofits; and mobile pantries, targeting areas in need.■ Assess community members' ability to access existing pantries, considering hours, transportation, offerings, etc.
2. Increase the number of eligible central Iowans accessing food assistance programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Identify barriers to accessing SNAP and WIC through surveys, interviews, etc.■ Develop training/video/toolkit aimed at key audiences about how to access food assistance and the benefits of accessing assistance.■ Consider addressing SNAP and WIC separately.■ Distribute the training/video/toolkit widely to target audiences.
3. Increase the number of organizations participating in a food-rescue initiative where donated food from restaurants, caterers, and other food-service providers is distributed to people in need through local social-service organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Assess feasibility and develop a directory of existing food-rescue partnerships.■ Identify potential new partnerships and develop communications and outreach plan.
4. Collect and disseminate accurate data about food insecurity and hunger in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties. 4a. Increase the effectiveness and accuracy of county-wide pantry data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Assess existing data-collection systems in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties.■ Identify opportunities for increased collaboration and how to better share data.■ Create summary report of existing data and gaps in data collection.
5. Collect and disseminate second annual survey of hunger and food insecurity in central Iowa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Collect survey responses using same tool and methodology as 2016 with added demographics.■ Share data with public, policymakers, funders, etc.
6. Increase awareness of the importance of the food safety net for central Iowans. Compile messaging, stories, and data to use in communications with decision makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Complete environmental scan of existing research, data, and messaging about effective safety nets.■ Develop key talking points, one-pagers, and stories that demonstrate the need for all elements of the safety net.■ Develop strategy for outreach/communications plan and develop target list for communications.■ Meet with key decision-makers and share messages.



CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT

OVERVIEW

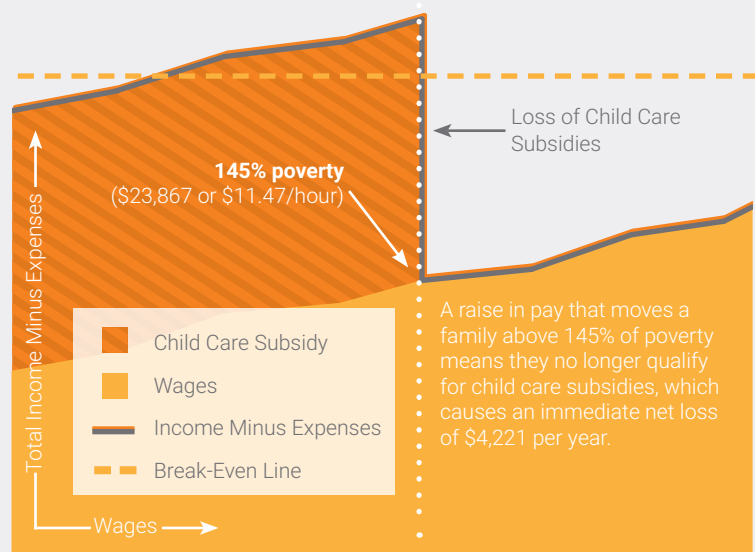
Iowa's Child Care Assistance program has an income eligibility threshold that creates a huge disincentive for parents to advance toward jobs that pay a financially self-sufficient wage. This is called the "child care cliff effect," because when parents' wages meet this threshold, their public benefits sharply drop off before their family has become self-sufficient. Parents deciding whether to accept a job that pays just a little more per hour, or take on more hours per week, often find themselves facing a family budget dilemma: if they earn just slightly more, the pay increase does not come close to offsetting the loss in benefits. In some cases, the effect is so dramatic that the family goes from having some discretionary income to being unable to cover basic necessities.

OBJECTIVE

The current income eligibility threshold (145% of the federal poverty level; view chart on page 11) for Iowa's Child Care Assistance program creates a steep drop-off of public benefits for families struggling to afford quality child care. This restriction makes it difficult for the state to encourage the workforce to develop the skills and experience necessary to meet employers' demands for middle-skill jobs, because families can be worse off if they receive a raise that puts them over this threshold. Increasing the threshold or creating a tiered-exit for the program will have a fiscal impact. We need to quantify the "opportunity cost" to Iowa's workforce to address the cliff effect.

THE CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT

Any raise could disqualify a parent from Child Care Assistance benefits.



Source: ACS 5 year estimates, 2012-2016



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Build key relationships to raise awareness of and alliances to address the child care cliff effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Included in Future Ready Iowa Alliance's recommendations.■ Expanded relationships with key statewide stakeholders and agencies.■ Engaged business voices in the conversation.■ Partnered with the Harkin Institute of Public Policy in research.
2. Measure changes in income levels and number of enrollees. Set goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Central Iowa Works■ DMACC■ Project Iowa	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Researched these questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the capacity of these programs?• How many current enrollees?• What is their income at initial sign-up?• Has income increased?
3. Develop list of agencies that ask applicants level of education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
4. Set a goal for increasing the number of community service organizations that include educational level on their intake process. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ SNAP, WIC, Section 8, Impact, Polk County, GA, FEC, Health■ DMACC, DMARC, Evelyn K Davis Center, Promise Jobs■ DHS, Child Care Assistance, Iowa Workforce Development■ Primary Health Care – Centralized Intake, St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, Central Iowa Works, 2-1-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
5. Distribute Bridges to Success flyer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
6. Set goal to increase the number of enrollees in educational training services (ELL, adult basic education, HSED).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
7. Complete inventory of organizations offering employer-sponsored child care benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
8. Complete inventory of business policies and practices regarding child care for employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
9. Identify best practices and return on investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.
10. Explore future ideas to support high-quality child care, including flexible work schedules and tax credits for high-quality child care related benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed.

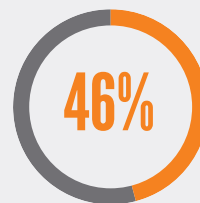


CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT

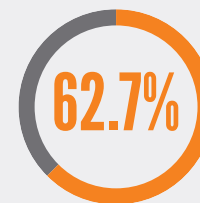
SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decrease the number of families in central Iowa affected by the child care cliff effect from 16,180 to 8,090. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1a. Collect and analyze data to update progress toward goal and work plan as needed. 1b. Continue working with the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) to enhance data collection on families impacted by the child care cliff effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Update Performance Measure 1 data to determine progress toward goal. ■ Set follow-up meetings with DHS to discuss data collection, results, and opportunities. ■ Work in partnership with the Harkin Institute’s research on the cliff effect. ■ Set data measures for how to measure progress with high school equivalency pathways. Define target measures.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Increase enrollees in job-skill training for middle-skill jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase state participation in SNAP Employment & Training program to draw down federal funds for education and training support. ■ Track implementation of high school equivalency diploma legislation that increases pathways for educational attainment. ■ Promote the cliff effect issue with the Future Ready Iowa Task Force to incorporate as workforce issue.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Increase employer knowledge on the benefits of quality child care for their workforce and encourage participation in advocating for change or increasing access to child care benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Meet with Association of Business and Industry leadership to discuss the cliff effect and partnership. ■ Present to the Iowa Business Council about incorporating the cliff effect issue in their advocacy agenda. ■ Develop effective messaging for employers to encourage child care benefits and/or facilities. ■ Recruit additional business leaders to carry the message that the cliff effect is a workforce issue. ■ Explore other federal options for child care benefits such as Flexible Spending Accounts/ Health Savings Accounts.

THE FAMILY’S SHARE

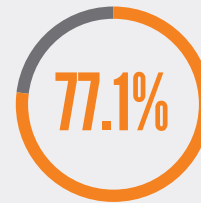
For a family with one infant and one preschooler just over the Child Care Assistance limit (146% of poverty), child care expenses equate to:



of household budget for in-home daycare.



of household budget for care at a center.



of household budget for care at an accredited center.

Source: Iowa Department of Human Services; Child Care Resource and Referral



SECOND-PHASE GOALS (cont.)

ACTIONS (cont.)

4. Continue to increase overall awareness of the child care cliff effect.
 - Consider an awareness building event with national-level guest to elevate issue with legislators and traditional media.
 - Increase media placements on issue through sign-on letters, editorials, letters to the editor, and earned media; include voices of those with lived experience.
 - Develop messaging strategies related to most common opposition to solving the cliff effect; develop Myth/Fact piece.
 - Promote and implement poverty simulations to increase knowledge of financial insecurity.

5. Encourage and support legislation expanding the income eligibility threshold for the Child Care Assistance program and providing an increased reimbursement rate for providers.
 - Incorporate the cliff effect issue in Skills2Compete Coalition recommendations for legislative action.
 - Encourage majority legislators to introduce legislation to increase eligibility threshold, increase provider rate, and provide for a tiered-exit.
 - Lobby federal delegation for increases in funding the Child Care & Development Block Grants to the state.

THE CLIFF IN IOWA



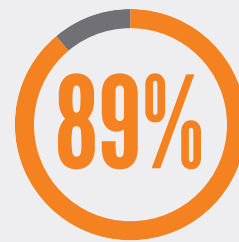
3 out of 4 households in Iowa (75%) with children under age 6 have all parents working, which means child care is a necessity.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates 2000-2014



Iowa is among the worst—39th in the nation—for the amount of income a family can earn and still receive Child Care Assistance.

Source: National Women's Law Center, Building Blocks: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2015



The average cost of full-time child care in Iowa is 89% of the income of someone working full time at minimum wage.

Source: The Care Report, New America, Sept. 2016

DEBRA

Occupation: Security Guard

Moved into her own apartment
after living in a shelter



HOUSING

OVERVIEW

While Greater Des Moines has been recognized nationwide for its low cost of living, thousands of central Iowans search for homes they can afford. Preliminary studies conducted for central Iowa's *The Housing Tomorrow Plan* show that the region has plenty of housing for moderate- and high-income households, and homes are very affordable compared with other cities. However, as in other cities, the lowest-income households have few options.

A 2012 Gruen Gruen + Associates study shows that the region lacks nearly 8,500 rental units for households earning less than \$15,000 annually, a group that nearly meets the federal poverty level definition. This is supported by more recent 2017 Polk County Housing Trust Fund research that suggests a shortage of 8,350 units for the same demographic. The overwhelming majority (86%) of these households are living in housing they cannot afford, defined as paying more than 30% of their income. 71% of these households pay more than 50% of their income each month on rent and utilities, leaving little remaining to pay for food, medical bills, transportation, child care, and other needs. These extremely low-income households cannot afford to pay more than about \$500 in rent and utilities each month, and the average household in this group pays \$735.

Strong demand for rental housing in the wake of the Great Recession has driven vacancy rates to near-record lows, which has pushed rents up to record levels regionwide.

FROM 2006-2016, THE DES MOINES AND WEST DES MOINES METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA LOST 2,526 UNITS THAT RENTED AT \$650 A MONTH OR BELOW.

Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University

OBJECTIVE

Market forces are driving rents higher and higher, and home ownership is becoming increasingly difficult. At the same time, many of the fastest-growing jobs in our community are paying low wages that increase the need for these affordable homes. To make housing more affordable to central Iowans with lower incomes, we need to develop new homes at lower prices and expand access to existing homes even as government resources continue to dwindle.



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Implement centralized intake system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Completed implementing Community Centralized Intake System, offering a coordinated approach to addressing the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.■ Reduced the number of individuals who identify as homeless in Polk County to 665 from 737.
2. Raise community awareness related to housing issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Held a first-of-its-kind Housing Summit where private developers became an active part of the affordable housing discussion.■ Increased awareness of affordable housing shortage in central Iowa.
3. Expand homelessness/housing efforts to other counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Working to have the first point-in-time count to identify homeless in Warren County.

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
1. Decrease the number of extremely low-income rental households who are severely rent-burdened (paying over 50% of their income for rent) by 10% by 2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increase the number of new rental homes affordable to households making less than 30% Area Median Income by directing a larger portion of affordable housing resources to creating these units.■ Advocate for mandatory inclusionary housing policies in cities throughout Polk County.
2. Improve the distribution of new, affordable rental homes throughout the region by encouraging development near robust public transportation, low-wage job centers, and services needed by low-income households.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Advocate for long-range land use planning in cities in Polk County that provide affordable housing near low-wage job centers.
3. Increase the availability and coordination of supportive services for households living in affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Create a comprehensive inventory of Permanent Supportive Housing (HUD definition).■ Create inventory of Supportive Service programs and providers available to households needing or living in affordable housing.

AARON

Occupation: Student at DMACC

Earned high school equivalency diploma through Bridges to Success



ADULT EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

ONLY 32% OF WORKING IOWANS HAVE THE SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS NEEDED TO WORK IN THE MIDDLE-SKILL POSITIONS THAT MAKE UP 55% OF IOWA'S JOBS.

Source: Advocacy Agenda Building on Smart Investments in Iowa's Workforce and Industries, 2018

OVERVIEW

Education level often determines an adult's ability to move into a sustainable career pathway, obtain a job that pays a living wage, and progress toward long-term financial stability. An adult's earnings can increase by more than \$700,000 over a lifetime by attaining at least a high school equivalency diploma²⁸ and even more with the addition of some postsecondary training.

Increasing opportunities for adults to gain fundamental employment-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials can expand the skilled workforce central Iowa employers need and, ultimately, grow our economy. Our community must build an infrastructure so that more adults can access and receive supportive services and navigate their way to meaningful employment.

OBJECTIVE

When people are asked about their hopes for the future, they often answer, "good jobs for myself and my children." This work group will focus on the intersection and gaps between employer needs and job seekers' skills and experiences. It's important that employers don't have unfilled jobs and anyone who wants a job can have one that builds on the strength of their skills and offers purpose. Working across sectors, we'll collaborate to help every central Iowan reach their potential.

²⁸National Center for Education Statistics, 2016, adjusted for inflation



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Support an initiative to increase the number of central lowans working towards their high school equivalency diploma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Launched the Bridges to Success initiative with an aggressive goal to help 10,000 central lowans achieve a high school equivalency diploma by 2020 by designing and implementing an evidence-based diploma preparation program.■ Awarded more than 1,500 high school equivalency diplomas in two years.
2. Advocate for legislation to expand alternative pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Advocated successfully for the passage of HF473, expanding alternative pathways for lowans to achieve high school equivalency diplomas.
3. Seek grant to support training initiatives in central Iowa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Secured \$2.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to launch Central Iowa HealthWorks, to train more than 400 central lowans in high-demand health care careers over the next four years.
4. Increase the number of central lowans pursuing postsecondary education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increased the number of individuals pursuing postsecondary education:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2,293 more people attained some college and/or associate degree in one year.• 2,739 more people attained a bachelor's degree or higher in one year.

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
1. 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 (Capital Crossroads – Human Capital/EDGE Plan).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increase the number of adults who complete a high school equivalency diploma.■ Promote awareness of the need to match employee skills and employer needs by not requiring college degrees for jobs that don't require college-level skills.■ Increase the number of individuals who complete industry-recognized certifications in technology-related careers.
2. Address advocacy issues to improve opportunities for adults to get the education and training needed for employment and career pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Support the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition recommendations.■ Repealed automatic driver's license suspension for non-driving drug offenders.■ Advance state engagement with the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training program (SNAP E&T).



EDUCATION: PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

**RESEARCH INDICATES THAT
STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING
OUT CAN BE IDENTIFIED AS EARLY
AS SIXTH GRADE.**

OVERVIEW

The community is working to increase the percentage of central Iowa students who graduate from high school. To achieve this goal, we must consider several factors that impact student success, including kindergarten readiness, reading proficiency by third grade, and support for students through middle and high school.

Research is clear that the middle school years (grades 6-8) are extremely important to the long-term trajectory of a student's life. Middle school students are growing and developing more rapidly than at any other stage of development except infancy. The middle grades are the "make it or break it" years, when some students begin to disengage from school, increasing the likelihood of dropping out of high school. There also is a critical gap of devoted resources and programs designed to address middle school students' specific needs.

While in-school time is important, out-of-school programs are just as critical. This time can help students build skills for academic success while supporting them in navigating the transitions through middle school. Out-of-school programs can also provide teens with the resources, skills, and role models they need to prevent them from disengaging from school.

OBJECTIVE

This work group continues to focus on kindergarten readiness. United Way of Central Iowa also remains committed to leading a community effort around addressing third-grade reading proficiency through READ to SUCCEED.

In the next phase, this work group will direct more attention to middle school success, an area stakeholders have identified as needing additional focus and resources. Research indicates that students at risk of dropping out can be identified as early as sixth grade. In fact, sixth-graders who display just one of the following off-track indicators have only a 15%-25% chance of graduating on time:²⁹

- A failing grade in mathematics or English/language arts
- An attendance rate of less than 85%
- One unsatisfactory behavior mark in a core course

This work group will purposefully address the gap between the needs of middle schoolers and current resources and programming in our community. In particular, the group will look at the initiatives of Future Ready Iowa and how to integrate career-readiness strategies in middle school.

²⁹Belfanz, R. & Herzog, L., 2005



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Continue to increase the high school graduation rate, with a focus on students of color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increased the aggregate graduation rate of the 20 school districts in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties from 83.4% (2008) to 93.6% (2016).■ Exceeded 80% for the minority graduation rate in Des Moines Public School District for the first time in 10 years.
2. Continue to support efforts to increase kindergarten readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increased, by 13% in three years, the number of students ready for kindergarten.
3. Advocate for legislation that will support educational issues and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Passed legislation for flexibility in Pre-K funding.■ Launched advocacy efforts to expand use of developmental screenings.■ Launched advocacy efforts to build stronger career readiness pathways throughout the K-12 system, including a community Excellence in Education convening.

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
1. Grow opportunities for the most vulnerable middle schoolers in central Iowa by offering age-appropriate, engaging experiences while addressing barriers and implementing strategies to increase their participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Pull together stakeholders in the community who are currently doing this work to identify, evaluate, and expand existing programs, while addressing barriers that prevent participation in these programs.■ Partner with public schools to explore out-of-school time opportunities that exist for middle school students, especially non-athletes.
2. Give providers and stakeholders who influence middle school students professional learning opportunities and opportunities to collaborate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Identify best practices for students to explore careers in middle school, including partnering with employers, labor unions, and other entities.■ Seek broad input from employers and service providers to identify actionable steps.
3. Engage with families, parent groups, and guardians of the most vulnerable children in central Iowa to highlight children's specific needs during their middle school years and provide access to resources for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Raise awareness about college and career-planning strategies that take place during eighth grade and encourage families, parent groups, and guardians to participate in the process.



CHUCK
Occupation: Paratransit bus driver
Provides transportation to people with disabilities



TRANSPORTATION

OVERVIEW

Transportation is connected to everything we do, whether it's working, attending class, running errands, going to medical appointments, or building social connections. Therefore, having a cost-effective method of transportation and ease of mobility are crucial to getting people from home, school, or work and back so they can earn enough to thrive.

OBJECTIVE

This work group has brought together multiple interests, coalitions, and organizations who have been looking at how to better connect human service agencies and transportation providers. This group is focused on improving mobility options for individuals in need, whether they are using public, private, or pedestrian modes of transportation.

LESS THAN 7% OF ALL DES MOINES REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SPENDING WILL GO TOWARD TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS, WHICH ARE KEY MODES OF TRANSPORTATION FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS.

Source: Fiscal Year 2018-2021 Transportation Capital Improvement Program, 2017, Des Moines area MPO

COLLABORATION FOR TRANSPORTATION

One of the goals of OpportUNITY is to work collaboratively and efficiently in central Iowa. There are many groups trying to build and enhance our transportation system for all. The TAG, or the Transportation Advisory Group, is a Committee of transportation providers, human service agencies, state and local government agencies, health care providers, and other interested stakeholders that work to coordinate human service transportation in central Iowa.

After a meeting between the TAG and OpportUNITY transportation groups, it became clear that our goals and vision for our community were the same. Instead of continuing to operate in silos, in March 2018, the TAG and the OpportUNITY transportation work group combined. This coordination means increased impact, reduced redundancy, and broader reach.



FIRST-PHASE GOALS	RESULTS
1. Develop pilot program to improve student attendance at Hiatt Middle School.	■ Provided unlimited free rides to all students attending Hiatt through pilot with Des Moines Public Schools and United Way. Funded by United Way of Central Iowa, the pilot program will evaluate if transit access improves student attendance.
2. Partner with DART to identify additional bus lines needed to support community.	■ Added Saturday D-Line service in 2016 for two years, thanks to a partnership between DART and the City of Des Moines. ■ Added Route 10 in November 2016, providing transit service to the new Broadlawns Clinic on East University, as well as midday service to Pleasant Hill.
3. Identify strategies to help make bus travel more passenger-focused.	■ Offering free Wi-Fi on all DART buses.
4. Partner with DART to address transportation desert to remove barrier for travel related to jobs, medical, etc.	■ Increased service to Deer Ridge apartments through DART to enable refugee residents to travel to jobs, medical appointments, and other essential services.
5. Support evaluation of transit.	■ Completed Community Regional Transit funding evaluation.

SECOND-PHASE GOALS	ACTIONS
1. Increase awareness, education, and trainings on how to access the public transportation system in central Iowa.	■ Establish and implement One Click, One Call to enable customers to make one phone call or search one website to receive information about all transportation services available in the community. ■ Increase passenger transportation, driver health, and safety trainings. ■ Work with volunteer organization to recruit and train volunteer drivers.
2. Partner with private companies to provide additional transportation resources/options to those who are in need in our community.	■ Hold focus groups with private companies to address unmet needs in their services, including wheelchair access, timeliness of services, and affordability.
3. Establish ways to consider safety, access, and equity across our transportation system in central Iowa.	■ Conduct unmet needs assessments for each county. ■ Promote complete streets to increase safety to and from stops. ■ Ensure that communication methods reach non-English speaking populations and those without smartphones and internet access. ■ Create and combine Mobility Management Access Plan and Transportation Resource Guide, and other documents, to have one complete guide.



SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers for the thousands of hours of effort put in by supporters of OpporTUNITY, including: the OpporTUNITY Leadership Roundtable, work group leads and members, founding members, summit participants, and all of those working to fight poverty together in central Iowa.

We look forward to working together to meet our goal of reducing poverty for all central Iowans.

COMMITTED ORGANIZATIONS

To see the list of our more than 220 committed organizations and to add your organization to the list, visit:

www.opportunitydsm.org/commitments

OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL

The OpporTUNITY Council represents diverse perspectives in the community and is committed to participating in the strategic direction and the work of the OpporTUNITY Plan, as well as promoting this effort throughout central Iowa.

- Mary Bontrager
- Supervisor Robert Brownell
- Elisabeth Buck
- Eric Burmeister
- Teree Caldwell-Johnson
- Mark A. Cooper
- Marvin L. DeJear
- Angela Dethlefs-Trettin
- Jenna M. Ekstrom
- Laura Graham
- Joy R. Greer
- Eric Idehen
- Stacey Johnson
- Edgar Ortiz
- Elizabeth Presutti
- Rev. Dr. Sarai Rice
- Carly Ross
- Cindy Rybolt
- Kris Schechinger-Camper
- Amanda R. Sedars
- Renee Sedlacek
- Jackie Turnquist-Sandoval
- Tray Wade
- Mira B. Yusef

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:



WE CAN FIGHT POVERTY TOGETHER

The OpportUNITY work is built on the understanding that we can help all in central Iowa thrive when we work together.

This is the game plan to get there:

- Address policy issues and work to meet the needs of **NEW IOWANS** (refugees and immigrants) who come to work and live in our community.
- Address issues, policies, and perceptions on the **RE-ENTRY** of lowans into society after incarceration or arrest.
- Increase easy access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable **FOOD** in our community.
- Address policy concerns such as the **CHILD CARE CLIFF EFFECT** that prevent parents from taking promotions and pay raises.
- Increase the number of low-income and **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** units and reduce homelessness.
- Increase opportunities for adults in all demographic groups to earn their high school equivalency diploma and engage in postsecondary education or **JOB TRAINING**.
- Support investments in **EDUCATION** and literacy to increase opportunities for children to learn and to participate in out-of-school academic activities, as well as for parents to engage in their children's education.
- Provide easy, affordable, and convenient access to low-cost **TRANSPORTATION**.

**EDUCATE.
ADVOCATE.
PARTICIPATE.
COMMUNICATE.**

Join the fight at
www.opportunitydsm.org

or on social media at
[@opportunitydsm](https://www.instagram.com/opportunitydsm)

In central Iowa, poverty wears an invisibility cloak.
Draped in accolades and top-ten awards, the city is justly proud.
But underneath, real people are struggling.


Kids missing meals.
Teens struggling to graduate.
Offenders trying hard to make right.
Refugees working to make a life.

Mothers riding the bus for hours across town.
Families spending the whole budget on rent.
Workers on 12-hour shifts who don't save a cent.

How many are there?

195,000

We love this city. We ♥ ALL of DSM.
Even the invisible ones.
So we fight for them.

We fight so they have OpportUNITY. 
The opportunity to thrive.

Join the fight.



OPPORTUNITY
FIGHTING POVERTY TOGETHER

www.opportunityDSM.org