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CITIES OF OPPORTUNITIES

Mayors' Institute on Job Creation and Economic Opportunity to Improve Health & Equity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the nation's leading advocacy organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. Through its membership and partnerships with state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource and advocate for more than 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans.

About this Report

The fifth in the Cities of Opportunity Mayors' Institute series, NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (IYEF) launched the [Mayor's Institute on Job Creation and Economic Opportunity to Improve Health and Equity](#) in January 2021. With generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the aim of the Mayors' Institute included supporting cities to spur job creation, informed by broader health and equity goals in light of the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following cities joined in this effort, which included a Mayors' Institute convening in May, 2021:

Rochester, Minnesota
San Antonio, Texas
San Francisco, California
Springfield, Massachusetts
Tacoma, Washington

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

[The Mayors' Institute on Job Creation and Economic Opportunity to Improve Health and Equity](#) was a year-long technical assistance cohort, that included a virtual convening of participating city mayors in May 2021. Five mayors and their respective city teams were selected through a competitive application process, and included **Rochester, Minnesota; San Antonio, Texas; San Francisco, California; Springfield, Massachusetts; and Tacoma, Washington**. The City of Lexington, KY withdrew from the cohort following the May convening due to staff capacity challenges related to COVID-19.

The cities engaged in both one-on-one consultations and several peer-to-peer learning opportunities, including two virtual convenings in May and December 2021. Topics explored as a group included: social enterprise, ways to enhance collaboration with anchor collaboratives, effective ways to engage in authentic community engagement, key data indicators to benchmark progress, and cross sector partnerships to improve job training, among others. In addition to NLC staff, city teams were supported by the engagement of faculty experts, in addition to key partners including the Health Anchor Network, Consilience Group and mySidewalk.

As a result, each city was able to formulate multiyear workplans for policy, practice and system changes to enhance supportive services and workforce training programs within their cities, that consider health and racial equity as key priorities. Each city chose unique focus areas for their work as part of the technical assistance associated with the Mayors' Institute, and each also established multiple outcomes toward comprehensive change to expand equitable opportunities. Additionally, many felt the relationships developed with peer cities, plus the leading experts and resources provided, would continue to inform their work and efforts well into the future.

Cities of Opportunity Background

[Economic Opportunity and health are inextricably linked](#), as both are critical to one's quality and length of life. NLC's approach to health improvement is rooted in the [Cities of Opportunity Theory of Change](#), which emphasizes the connections across issues and puts racial and health inequities at the center of city work. By intentionally supporting cities to address race and equity, our systems framework and approach supports alignment across city agencies towards sustainable progress, recognizing that no one person or entity can solve complex issues on their own. It also strives to meet cities 'where they are at,' recognizing that the journey for each city is based on their local and state context.

“ Ultimately we want a workforce that's employed, that is economically mobile, that is breaking cycles of generational poverty, so it's really a reorientation of how we look at workforce development.”

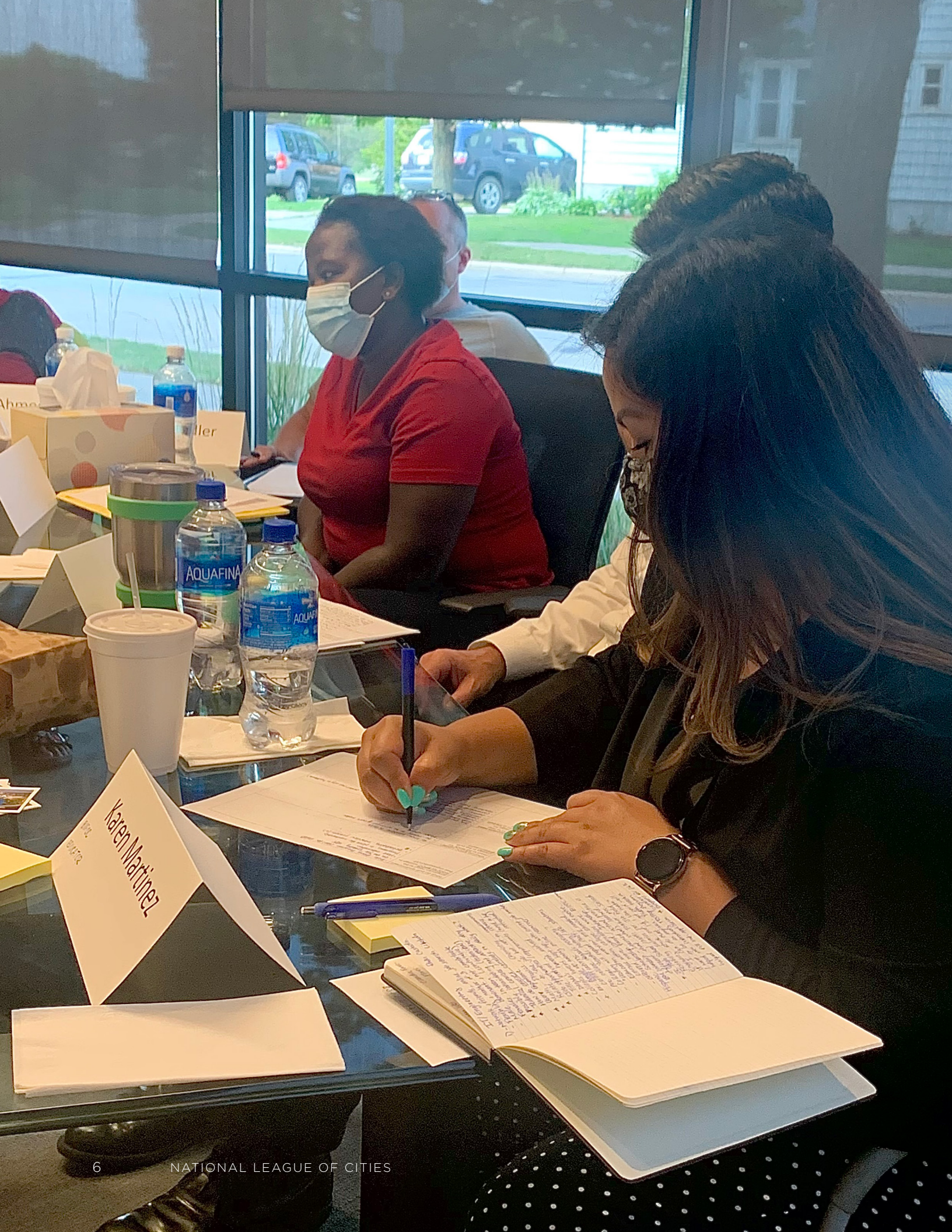
Mayor Ron Nirenberg, San Antonio, TX

“ We came into this NLC opportunity, because for the first time, I felt it was time to put equity and workforce as a leading issue in our growing city. We saw in the pandemic that the city has to step up and help guide our reforms.”

Mayor Kim Norton, Rochester, MN

San Francisco, CA. City EMT Graduation





City Efforts and Actions

“With better access to economic opportunities and living wage jobs, families can begin to rise out of poverty and better care for themselves, their families, and our community. This work has been focused in such a way that we hope does more than just provide a living. By working with our local, regional and national partners, we also hope to do our part in lifting the weight of systemic racism on impacted workers.”

Mayor Victoria Woodards, Tacoma, WA

Photo: Rochester, Minnesota. Women and Construction co-designers building a solution together for a more inclusive construction site that anticipates and plans for the needs of women workers of color. The solution centers on training, mentorship, and collaboration. “This is an exciting start!” says co-designer and president of Benike Construction, Aaron Benike.

Summary of City Efforts and Actions

CITY	VISION	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS	ON THE HORIZON
Rochester, MN	All residents are economically secure and have a high quality of life.	Alignment of entrepreneurial services for Black, Latinx, immigrant, refugee, migrant, and justice involved populations. Prioritizing outreach to women of color for construction/built environment industries and expanding career pathways opportunities.	Continued collaboration for funding and providing service (need to fund more culturally responsive navigators). The city will investigate forming an asset map for Entrepreneurship Ecosystems.
San Antonio, TX	Residents enjoy economic prosperity through employment in local in-demand, higher wage jobs that provide stable careers, increased incomes, and good benefits.	Expanded effective multi-sector partnerships. Implemented strategies that effectively engaged employers to shape and support the initiative. The city established a new Workforce Development Office and hired its first Executive Director. Invested in a shared data system that will coordinate partners' referrals.	Launch SA: Ready to Work in early January 2022. Sustain stakeholder engagement, especially employers and trainees/residents. Onboard case management and training partners. Begin enrollment starting in April
San Francisco, CA	Residents enjoy economic prosperity grounded in physical, mental, economic, and social health.	Formalized and focused foundational partnerships with key stakeholders. Partnership committed to address economic/health disparities.	Building on these learnings to create a toolkit for aligning partnerships to address workforce/health disparities. Evaluate health care occupations training for root causes of racial outcome disparities.
Springfield, MA	All residents have opportunities for economic prosperity.	Built out formalized city-wide program of work to increase small/BIPOC-owned contracting as part of the Anchor in collaboration with major employers. Established a dedicated municipal position within the Procurement Office specifically for small business contracting.	Investing resources in preparing individuals and businesses for employment and contract opportunities through holistic wrap around services. Increased diversity in procurement.
Tacoma, WA	Residents earn family-sustaining incomes that support stable, high-quality housing.	Braided funding and support to target high barrier populations and created a robust, paid and fully supported training opportunity. Piloting a resident co-design model of the pathway for sustained community engagement in training programs.	The Pilot will kick off January to June 2022. The city will scale this pathway and replicate this model going forward.

Rochester, MN

The home of Mayo Clinic is considered a highly respected institution and a sought-after destination for health and wellness, and yet BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee residents are struggling. To restore economic mobility and improve health outcomes the city has prioritized investing in the success of residents who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant, refugee, migrant, or justice involved, especially, women. They prioritized the need to increase entrepreneurship in the community, as well as essential services to support them.

The city team joined the Mayors' Institute already well prepared with a detailed workplan, so over the course of the year the team worked to narrow their focus to better align disparate efforts. To that end, the city focused on coordinating their entrepreneurial services provided through Collider Foundation, Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc. (RAEDI), and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). They also prioritized outreach to women of color for construction/ built environment industries. They expanded their career pathways opportunities, while continuing to align private/ public partnership efforts and workforce convenings for system-level strategy development. The team found that though they wanted to co-design their programs with community, they needed to first make sure that they were very intentional with their budgets, in order to pay participants for their time. Funding overall is a city challenge, made worse by COVID-19 and not being able to stretch their ARPA recovery funds to cover their goals.

Even with funding challenges, Mayor Kim Norton continues to lead the work and says, "I would just say that workforce and equity are on Rochester's agenda, we are going to move ahead with this funding or not, it's going to take a lot longer without some funding resources, but we are not stepping away from it."



San Antonio, TX

San Antonio began their Mayors' Institute journey with a victory, a ballot measure that secured nearly \$200M to support SA: Ready to Work (RTW), a 4-5-year workforce development initiative that will train and connect up to 10,000 residents a year to in-demand, high-wage careers. Learning from the lessons of their COVID-19 recovery workforce development program, Train for Jobs SA, which specifically targeted low-income residents who lost their job during the pandemic, RTW attempts to extend workforce development opportunities to more residents earning less than a living wage. In San Antonio, Latino and African American residents of all ages and genders disproportionately live in poverty.

Using an equity lens, RTW will target residents without high school diplomas or higher education credentials, more specifically, women of color, single parent households from specific high-need census tracts. The team has used their engagement in the initiative to structure and track their planning and implementation process. Early successes include the creation of a Workforce Development Office, and hiring its first Executive Director, who is charged with aligning this work. This newly created office is a game changer and will propel this work forward. The city also invested in a shared data and referral system to be able to track their impact and to facilitate a participant-friendly, seamless wraparound services referral system.

A key lesson learned is the importance of engaging the stakeholders and partner organizations to ensure buy-in from all employers and residents. SA Ready to Work will launch in January 2022 and begin enrollment in April.

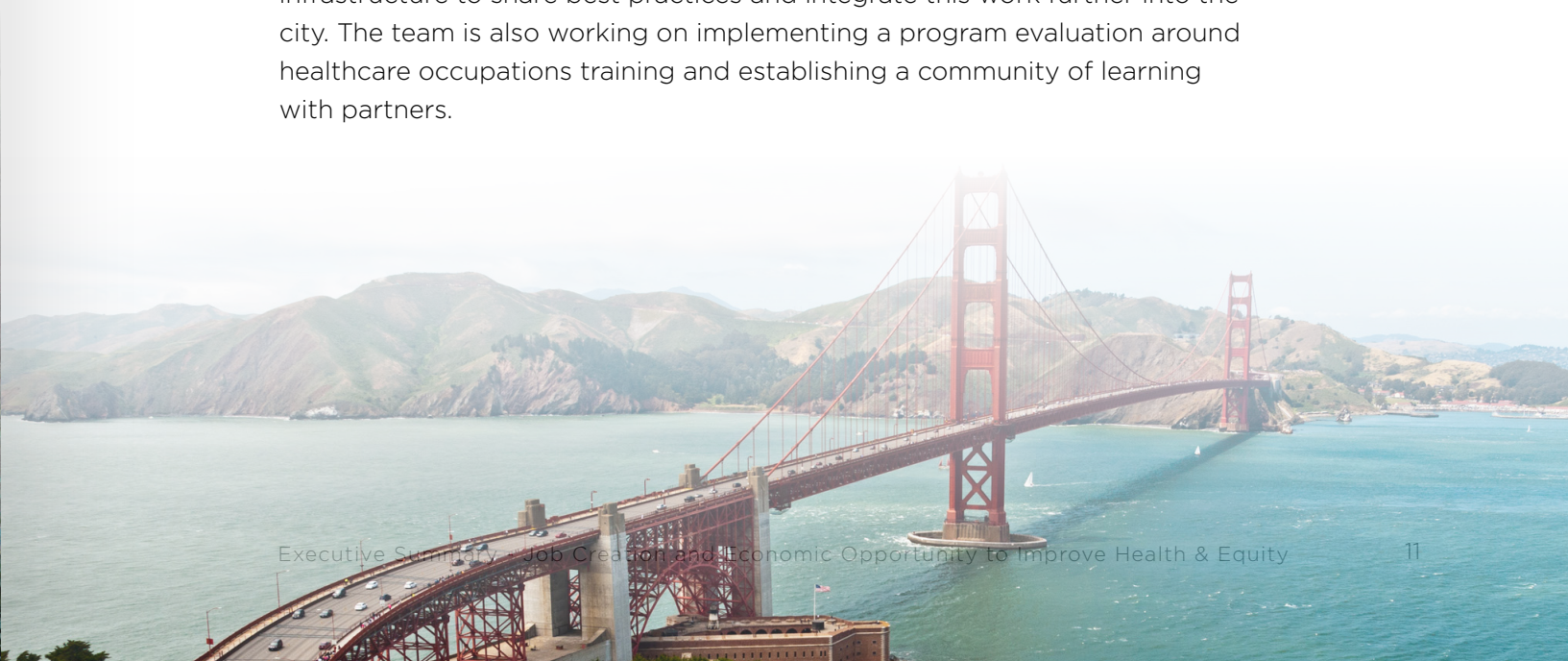


San Francisco, CA

From the very beginning of the Mayors' Institute, San Francisco clearly focused on improving the healthcare workforce with a focus on increasing access to high-quality career opportunities in the healthcare sector for the African American community. Supported by extensive community engagement led by the Human Rights Commission and extensive data collection led by the Department of Public Health, the city sought to improve the social determinants of health for low-income Black and African American San Franciscans by providing community development infrastructure for economic vitality in low-income communities, including healthcare occupational skills training programs, supportive and stabilizing services, and placement in employment with health care employers.

In consideration of the complexity of the City's workforce system, San Francisco assembled a large public-private partnership with specialization in equity, workforce, health and human services, community development, human resources, and philanthropy, and prioritized teamwork and alignment. Once the team formulated the plan, it expanded to include additional essential stakeholders and community representatives. The city team learned that this work requires critical infrastructure to be sustained, such as staffing strategic planning, regular convenings, and frequent communication. It also requires openness to iteration, whether it be changing mid-term goals or redefining success.

By bringing partners together and being flexible and nimble with goals, the team was able to build trust and develop strong mission alignment. The city team is working to document lessons learned and create routinized infrastructure to share best practices and integrate this work further into the city. The team is also working on implementing a program evaluation around healthcare occupations training and establishing a community of learning with partners.



Springfield, MA

Before joining the Mayors' Institute, Springfield had a very robust Anchor Institution Collaborative, with many health systems and other organizations involved. This Collaborative had already prioritized increased purchasing from local and BIPOC-owned business and diversifying their workforces as initial priorities. Through conversations with the city team and other collaborative members, the city decided that their goal would be to build their capacity to be the lead collaborative member in relationship to local and BIPOC-owned business purchasing.

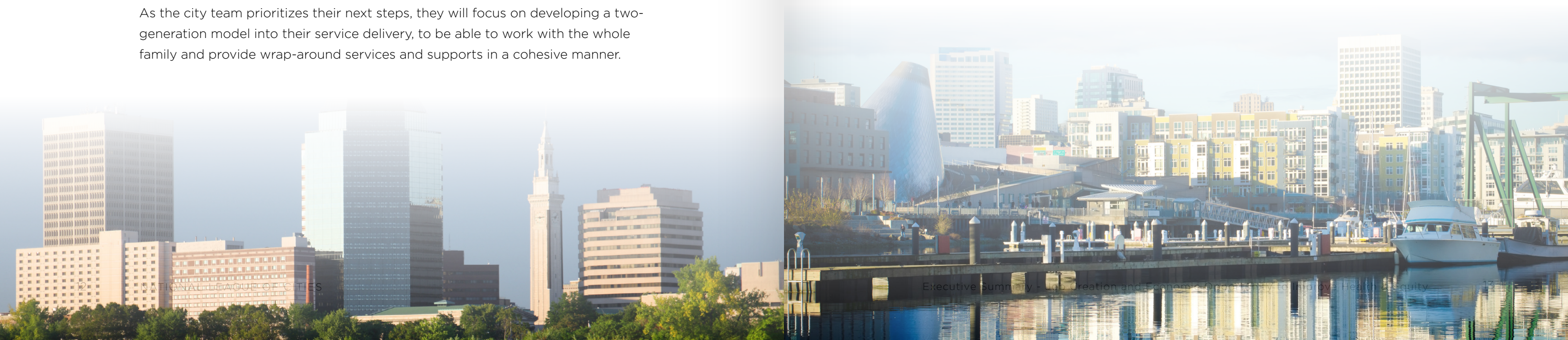
As the city team narrowed its focus to preparing businesses to take advantage of the opportunities that the city had to offer and improve on work readiness among city residents, the city decided to focus on their procurement practices by establishing a position within the Procurement Office that specifically works on small business contracts. The goal of the role is to diversify local contractors by better matching municipal opportunities with local businesses and working with other anchor institutions to align hiring and procurement priorities. The team also prioritized technical assistance to local businesses to prepare them for municipal contracting opportunities. Based on learnings to date, the city recognizes the need for improved wrap around support services to ensure individuals are better prepared to enter the workforce, while prioritizing small business growth.

At the same time, these barriers also impact individuals and businesses who would be otherwise ready and interested to contract with major institutions. As the city team prioritizes their next steps, they will focus on developing a two-generation model into their service delivery, to be able to work with the whole family and provide wrap-around services and supports in a cohesive manner.

Tacoma, WA

The City of Tacoma had a clear agenda for expanding healthcare sector job opportunities for residents of the city. In collaboration with anchor institution partners established prior to the Mayors' Institute, Tacoma braided funding from the city, county, and their partner, Workforce Central, to create a program that allowed residents to “learn and earn”. To create a health care apprenticeship pathway in the community, the city team partnered with leaders in housing to pilot a co-design model to ensure the success of program participants and sustain community engagement. For this pilot program, the city targeted un- and underemployed people from Salishan, a diverse and mixed-income neighborhood home to a large public housing site.

Throughout the process Tacoma prioritized building trust among residents to scale initiatives to advance racial equity. The team learned that trust was essential and to build genuine connections with residents, it was essential to slow down and take the time to forge strong relationships with potential participants in the proposed apprenticeship program. The city team is gearing up for the launch of the program in January 2022. After this six-month pilot period completes, the team intends to further refine and scale this pathway going forward. Future plans include developing a co-design model into other career pathways that they build, with the same wrap around services. They also plan to embed the training program in Pierce County through a train the trainer model, so the local institutions are providing the training.





Conclusion

Following months of intensive work and planning, the Mayors' Institute city teams are advancing innovative approaches to job creation, employment, and economic opportunity through COVID-19 recovery initiatives. They are leading with equity and focusing their efforts on low-to-no income residents who face barriers to employment. Through workshops, team calls, and larger all team convenings, the cities shared lessons learned, challenges they faced, and best practices that they encountered. Faculty, NLC staff, and our sponsors and partners provided informed dialogue specific to social enterprise, workforce training, anchor institution approaches, better use of data, and partnerships to inform and advance efforts that also address health and equity.

While the cities began with very different efforts, they all focused their workplans to ensure that they are aligning efforts and collaborating with key stakeholders for success. Though they are all focused on concrete initiatives, they are working within the context and with an eye towards long-term systems change.

Photo: Rochester, Minnesota. Women and Construction co-designers building a solution together for a more inclusive construction site that anticipates and plans for the needs of women workers of color. The solution centers on training, mentorship, and collaboration. "This is an exciting start!" says co-designer and president of Benike Construction, Aaron Benike.

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