

07 December 2023 | Community Voice | Detroit Workforce Leadership Academy

# *Community Voice*

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# ***Michigan's Future Depends on the Next Generation of Workers***

- 8,000 working age adults leave Michigan annually
- Median age of Michigan residents = 40.3 years old
- Labor shortages
  - inflation
  - decreased business expansion
  - supply chain disruption

# ***What is Workforce Development?***

- Organization-centered culture
- American-context
- Local-global ecosystem
- Builds skills to maximize employment and career advancement potential
  - Current workers
  - Future workers

# ***The Workforce Development System***

- Employers, industry, and workers
- Nonprofit and collaborative entities and funders
- Education and training providers
- Government and the public sector

***Key Question:***

***How might we engage young adults to help guide workforce program outreach and access.***

# *Working Logic Model*

<b>Assumptions</b>	<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Young adults are a valuable resource	Young people's lived experience	Create a paid youth advisory board	Increase awareness of workforce program opportunities
Inclusion fosters innovation	Barriers to access and inclusion	Address barriers	Increase enrollment and graduation from workforce programs
Local-global ecosystem	Workforce programs + 2023 Detroit Workforce Leadership Academy	Foster collaboration across workforce leaders in the region	Future economic stability and growth

# ***Participants***

***N=15***

- 65% High school diploma
- 25% Some college
- 5% Bachelor's degree
- 5% Master's degree
  
- 50% Black
- 50% White

# ***What we learned***

## **“How does workforce development benefit me?”**

- 50% of participants did not know what “workforce development” meant
- 50% actively sought workforce development program information
  - friends, family, and trusted educational representatives



# ***What we learned*** *Continued*

## **“What and who can I trust?”**

- Social media platforms
  - Preferred platform: Instagram
- Email from trusted sources

## **“What motivates me?”**

- Pay, location, passion

# ***Recommendations***

- Identify opportunities for youth involvement
  - Gather a larger pool of data
  - Further understand young people's lived experience and communication methods
- Determine strategy to improve workforce communications
- Strengthen capacity, build connections
  - Engage training providers, business, and education professionals

# Recommendations *Continued*

- Collect and assess data to measure progress
- Replicate strategies in new contexts



***Thank You!***

**INTRODUCTION** Michigan’s future depends on the next generation of workers, however, 8,000 working aged residents leave Michigan annually<sup>1</sup>. Our state is currently aging with the median age of residents at 40.3 years old<sup>2</sup>. Labor shortages lead to decreased business expansion, inflation, and supply chain disruption<sup>3</sup>. The next generation of workers are key to Michigan’s future. Within this context, it is critical that we engage young adults (16-24 years old) to foster systems change through community voice. In our efforts, we draw on the work of Eyster et al (2016) who define a local workforce system as “the organizations and activities that prepare people for employment, help workers advance in their careers, and ensure a skilled workforce exists to support local industry and the local economy over time<sup>4</sup>.” We postulate that broad workforce development marketing and communications strategies need to involve the community voice of young adults.

**The Workforce Development<sup>5</sup> System** communicates with individuals and communities. Yet, workforce development marketing promotions have demonstrated limited reception and effectiveness among young adults. Understanding how young adults interact with existing communication platforms for training and jobs programs may provide insight for workforce development promotion.

<p><b>Nonprofit and collaborative entities and funders</b>, including community and faith based organizations, foundations and philanthropic organizations, workforce service providers, and workforce intermediaries</p>	<p><b>Employers, industry, and the workforce:</b> business and trade associations, industry organizations, employers, labor unions, and staffing agencies.</p>
<p><b>Government and the public sector:</b> American Job Centers, workforce development boards, public libraries, public social service agencies, economic development agencies, economic elected officials, and local, state, and federal governments.</p>	<p><b>Education and training providers:</b> colleges and universities, K-12, non-degree education and training providers, adult education providers (e.g., English language learning).</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Changing Workforce Systems</a>, The Urban Institute, 2017.</p>

The aim of this project is to understand how we might engage young adults to help guide workforce program outreach and access. For more detail, see the working logic model below.

<sup>1</sup> Michigan Chronicle, 2023. Source: <https://michiganchronicle.com/2023/10/13/survey-says-detroits-young-adults-dont-want-to-stay-in-detroit/> Date Retrieved: Nov 12, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2023. Source: <https://www.axios.com/local/detroit/2023/09/21/census-data-michigan-older-whitmer-council> Date Retrieved: Nov 12, 2023

<sup>3</sup> US Chamber of Commerce, 2023. Source: <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage-the-most-impacted-industries> Date Retrieved: Nov 12, 2023

<sup>4</sup> Eyster, Lauren, Christin Durham, Michelle Can Nowy, and Neil Damron. 2016. “Understanding Local Workforce Systems.” Washington, DC: Urban Institute. <http://urbn.is/2fQZBw4>

<sup>5</sup> **Workforce Development** is an organizational-centered perspective driven by capitalism and American culture within a local-global workforce ecosystem. It is often used to refer to formal training and jobs programs which are intentionally designed to provide education and training that builds skills to maximize potential of current and potential workers.

<b>ASSUMPTIONS</b>	<b>INPUTS</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Young adults are a valuable resource	Young people (16-24) Lived experience	Create a paid youth advisory board	Increased awareness of workforce programs
Inclusion fosters innovation	Barriers to access, inclusion	Address barriers	Increased graduation from programs
Local-Global ecosystem	Workforce programs / 2023 Detroit WLA	Foster collaboration across workforce leaders in region	Future economic stability & growth

**METHODS** We developed open-ended questions for focus groups and Google forms to collect data from fifteen young adults aged 18 to 24 years old over five days. Participants engaged in extended discussion and writing about workforce development program marketing and communications. They were prompted to discuss how they find training and jobs program information, how they use social media platforms, and how they evaluate trustworthiness of information. A thematic qualitative analysis was applied to the data.

**RESULTS** Young adults expressed a strong interest in understanding what and where workforce training and job programs were at. About half of the participants were not sure what “workforce development” meant while the other half actively sought out information about training and jobs programs from friends, family, and trusted college representatives. Ultimately, participants indicated they wanted to know how participation in workforce development programs could benefit them in terms of pay, location, and personal passion.

Social media platforms were considered a useful source for learning about workforce development programs and were often the “go-to” when searching for information or advice. Young adults found Instagram to be the most useful social media platform for training and job program communications. Email was also a highly rated source for communications, however, identifying trustworthy training and jobs program information was a function of the relationship with the sender. Generally, young people trusted email they received from a known friend, a family member, or an official college representative.

**RECOMMENDATIONS** In recent years, there has been a proliferation of social media-delivered workforce development promotion campaigns targeting young adults. Such campaigns use the immense popularity of social media platforms to reach young adults with messaging to improve their employment potential. However, despite their promise, many interventions have demonstrated poor reach or limited effectiveness. It is not clear if young adults associate “workforce development” with training and job programs. Further research is needed to discover what key words and concepts are most effective when communicating with young adults. Family, friends, and community continues to be a common way that young people learn about opportunities. Research is needed to determine how to best support a community-based approach to distributing information.

In workforce development, **systems change** "describes efforts and initiatives that go beyond providing direct services to individual jobseekers and aim[s] to transform how organizations effectively support employers and the workforce" (source: The Urban Institute, 2017).



Systems change aims to foster collaboration, quality, access and inclusion, evidence-based decision-making, scale, and industry sustainability. Our recommendations align with federal policy priorities emphasized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) to promote “the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system in the United States.”<sup>6</sup> Our workforce systems change aims to serve employers and workers through improving marketing and communications practices focused on recruiting young adults for training and job programs.

Advisory board involvement of compensated youth stakeholders may address barriers such as intergenerational poverty, affordable childcare access, digital access and literacy, disability, long-term youth unemployment, justice-involved background, mental and physical health, lack of foundational and essential skills, access to reliable transportation.

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<sup>6</sup> See Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Sec. 2.