

Our Bridges Out of Poverty initiative addresses the need for a comprehensive, community-wide approach to reducing poverty by implementing a program that will help our residents in poverty move to self-sufficiency. Poverty is a common denominator for many sectors and local service providers; absorbing essential community resources. Its impact is felt by and impeding outcomes across a wide range of entities, including schools, healthcare, social services, faith communities, workforce development, employers and government. Poverty is a complex problem that demands a comprehensive approach. Poverty is not resolved by a single sector or with a single program or even set of programs, because there so many variables. Bridges Out of Poverty is an evidence-based approach to reducing poverty, it not a program rather a set of constructs that adaptively applied positively improves outcomes.

Poverty Data

Rockford MSA Poverty Data

13.7% Overall Poverty Rate; Ranking 44 out of 100 Comparable Communities.

23% Residents Under the Age of 18 in Poverty; Ranking 69 out of 100 Comparable Communities

3.7% Of Our Full-time Workers Living in Poverty; Ranking 77 out of 101 Comparable Communities

United Way of Illinois reports that 23% of households in Winnebago County are considered ALICE households. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. These are households that earn above the poverty level, but not enough to afford bare-bones household budgets.

Community of Practice

Engagement by 45+ Key Community Participants in our Quarterly Meetings on our Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Poverty

We launched our Bridges Out of Poverty Community of Practice in January 2021 and continue to host quarterly sessions which are focused on how to implement the Bridges Constructs and Strategies within each organization while also discussing the barriers or policies that could be changed at the organizational and community level to better serve those in poverty.

Community Trainings

250+ Individuals at 130 Unique Organizations Have Participates in our Free Community Trainings

Community trainings provide community leaders and interested community members with the understanding of the *Complexities of Poverty*, as well as how they can play a key role in the project by learning how to implement the Bridges constructs within their organizations, and how we are implementing bridges as a community collaborative. Trainings have been provided to our Faith Community, Nonprofit Groups and local Agencies. These trainings are free and available to be scheduled at any time.

Getting Ahead

Graduates Report the Following: 25% Have Had an Increase in Income, a Decrease in Debt, an Increase in Education, and 50% Report a Decrease on the need for State or Federal Benefits

We launched the Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World curriculum in the Fall of 2020. In 2021 we identified partner organizations to host these classes at their respective locations for their clients. One Body Collaboratives supports these programs financially through the funding we have received. Community partners include: AARC@ Booker Washington Center, Life Church, NiReach, Rockford Housing Authority and YSN/Rockford MELD. We continue to seek additional partner organizations to implement the Getting Ahead curriculum, and ongoing funding to support the program. In conjunction with our partners, we anticipate graduating a total of 25 individuals this year. Our goal is to increase that to 50 graduates next year.

Getting Ahead in the Workplace

Graduates Reported the Following: 100% Reported an Increase in Integrity and Motivation, 100% indicated Progress on the Goal Areas Set at the Beginning of the Classes

This year we also launched the Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes. These classes are facilitated at a workplace location or as part of a workforce training program. The curriculum helps under resourced workers to build their resources and life stability, this in turn helps the employer by having more stable employees which equates to higher productivity and a decrease in employee turnover. Our community partners in this area are Bergstrom and Rockford Rescue Mission. Our goal in 2022 is to increase the number of partner locations thus increasing the number of graduates as well.

Staying Ahead Network

Research Shows it Takes 2-5 Years for an Individual to Transition from Poverty to Self-Sufficiency Our Community Must Provide Ongoing Support Throughout this Journey

We created our Staying Ahead Network to provide ongoing support to our Getting Ahead graduates. A monthly newsletter is sent to each Getting Ahead graduate with ongoing programs and assistance that can be provided in these areas throughout our community. In 2022, we will add class offerings in key areas such as: budgeting, parenting, employment assistance and more. These additional classes would be on-offs and offer more in-depth training in these areas to assist people who are moving from poverty to self-sufficiency.

National Recognition

Recognized as a National Best Practice

Our project was named a National Best Practice and we were invited to provide a breakout session at the Bridges Out of Poverty National conference that was hosted in September. This provided us with an opportunity to share data on our project with our peers in other communities.

For More Information

Visit our website at: OneBodyCollaboratives.org; or Contact: Mary Cacioppi, Executive Director, One Body Collaboratives by email at Mary.Cacioppi@OneBodyCollaboratives.org