



North Lawndale Employment Network

creating a community that works



Dear Members, Partners, and Friends:

As we approach the five year anniversary of the North Lawndale Employment Network, I am delighted to report on our organizational and program developments. In October of 2003, we moved our offices from the space we shared with one of our parent organizations, Sinai Community Institute, to our own home, the North Lawndale Employment Network Resource Center. We are now located in a building we lease from another community partner, H.I.C.A., at 3726 West Flournoy. The NLEN Resource Center opened to the public in April 2004. Now, in addition to the many clients enrolled in our programs, we provide employment search and advancement resources and assistance to walk-in North Lawndale clients.



Brenda Palms Barber

A major development is our affiliation with the Annie E. Casey Foundation Centers for Working Families. The Foundation has always supported our work, but this new relationship has enabled us to focus our programming, especially through our new Resource Center, on the comprehensive financial needs of families seeking self-sufficiency.

I am also extremely proud of the Sweet Beginnings collaboration, a North Lawndale-based urban farming and honey production business established to create transitional jobs. Sweet Beginnings has already employed several individuals, harvested and sold honey, and begun to develop a line of products called Beeline.

As you will see from the new Network brochure, we continue to offer our successful U-Turn Permitted and Building Beyond! job readiness programs, and offer job placement assistance and retention support to completers. In the last year, 627 people attended the U-Turn Permitted orientation, 436 enrolled, and 289 completed the program. Fifteen young adults completed the Building Beyond! program, with four of them continuing on to college, nine securing employment, and two completing a high school degree or equivalency. The Network helped 187 U-Turn completers to secure employment.

Through a nine-month strategic planning process facilitated by WSEP Ventures Consulting and funded by the Chicago Community Trust and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we have refined our mission, stated a vision, defined our beliefs, and articulated a new overall business model. We have also decided to formalize community input by establishing a Community Advisory Committee to help direct our policy advocacy activities and educate the community about Network initiatives. Two residents who are already providing valuable assistance in this capacity are Shirley Jones and Velma Johnson.

We have also reorganized our internal operations to build on the natural talents of our staff. We are now divided into three departments: Workforce Development Programs, Internal Operations, and Business Relations and Innovations. We have also had the opportunity to participate in special staff trainings, including the Women's Self-Employment Project's management training for leadership staff, and the Developing Cultural Competency course provided by the Chicago Jobs Council. We have also developed a capacity-building partnership with Project

Match and LISC to help adapt a client-tracking model that follows the advancement and employment needs of our clients for a lifetime.

The Network owes much of its success to the leadership of our extraordinary board members, who are committed to our work beyond the traditional call of duty. This year, we bid farewell to two members, Doug Werman and Gail Nelson, and see Debra Wesley Freeman step down from her position as board president after five years of dedicated service. We are fortunate to welcome three new board members, Cerathel Burnett, Sylvia Houston, and Spruiell White, and a new board president, Bob Wordlaw. Thank you for helping create a community that works.

Sincerely,



Brenda Palms Barber
Executive Director
North Lawndale Employment Network

CREATING A COMMUNITY THAT WORKS AWARDS

Outstanding Service

Dawn Cooper

Models of Success

Vincent Thomas, U-Turn Permitted

Eric Harris, NLEN Resource Center

Shaunavera Tucker, Building Beyond!

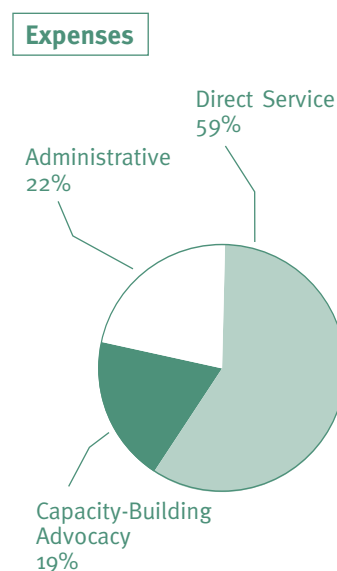
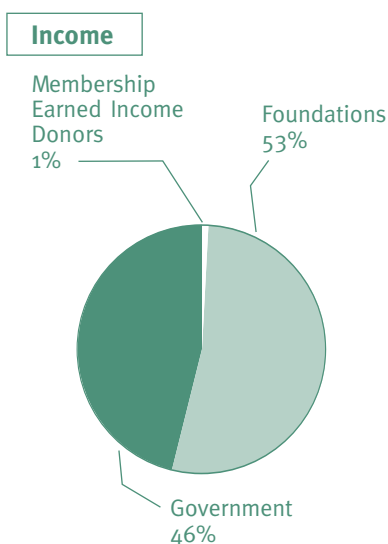
Business Partner

Advocate Trinity Hospital

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004, income for the North Lawndale Employment Network was approximately \$1,181,258. Of this income, private foundations and corporate contributors provided \$627,948, government contracts brought in \$538,210, and membership income, earned income, and individual donations equaled \$15,100.

During this period, expenses were approximately \$1,181,258. Of these expenses, \$689,954 supported direct services, \$227,829 supported capacity-building and advocacy activities, and \$263,475 supported overhead costs and administrative expenses.



MISSION

To improve the earnings potential of the North Lawndale community through innovative employment initiatives that lead to economic advancement and an improved quality of life for residents.

VISION

North Lawndale is a strong, economically thriving, diverse community connected to high quality job opportunities and serves as a replicable model for communities nationwide.

CORE BELIEFS

- We believe that neighborhood-focused employment initiatives are fundamental to **improving the quality of life** for neighborhood residents.
- We believe that our neighborhood-based work can influence policy by serving as a **model for change**.
- We believe in creating an environment that enables people to **transform themselves**.
- We believe that connections to education and employment can **positively impact** individuals' economic advancement and quality of life.
- We believe that, most of the time, **people make good decisions** if given the right information and opportunities.
- We believe that **work values** can be learned.

"NETWORK STAFF HAVE A MORE CUSTOMER SERVICE TYPE APPROACH, A MORE 'WE CARE' ATTITUDE. THEY LET YOU IN ON A PART OF THEMSELVES. A LOT OF PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY IN THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD, THEY DON'T MAKE THEMSELVES AN EXAMPLE TO MAKE YOU KNOW THEY UNDERSTAND." – NETWORK CLIENT

"U-TURN IS A VERY EFFECTIVE, VERY IN-DEPTH PROGRAM. THAT IS WHY I AM SO HAPPY TO HAVE PARTICIPATED AND RECENTLY GRADUATED. I BENEFITED FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END."
– U-TURN PERMITTED GRADUATE

FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

Breaking Ground (formerly APL Plastics)
Carole Robertson Center for Learning
The Delta Institute
Gads Hill Center
Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation
Lawndale Christian Development Corporation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Manley Academy Construction Technology Small School
Sinai Community Institute
Steans Family Foundation
University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute
Westside Association for Community Action

"I WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE . . . AND OPEN MY OWN BUSINESS. I WANT TO HELP OUT MY COMMUNITY."

– BUILDING BEYOND! CLIENT

"THE NETWORK IS VERY ATTENTIVE TO EMPLOYER NEEDS, AS WELL AS THE NEEDS OF THEIR CLIENTS AND HOW THEY CAN CONNECT THE TWO." – EMPLOYER

"WHAT I FOUND TO BE THE MOST INTRIGUING ABOUT THE U-TURN PROGRAM IS THAT, YOU KNOW, THINGS DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE THE WAY THEY USED TO BE."

– U-TURN PERMITTED GRADUATE

"SINCE I HAVE BEEN ENROLLED IN THE BUILDING BEYOND! PROGRAM I HAVE LEARNED MORE ABOUT MY COMMUNITY, CHICAGO, AND OTHER THINGS THAT ARE REALLY IMPORTANT. . . . I LEARNED A LOT ABOUT JOBS, ABOUT EDUCATION, AND I GAINED MORE SKILLS."

– BUILDING BEYOND! CLIENT

Match and LISC to help adapt a client-tracking model that follows the advancement and employment needs of our clients for a lifetime.

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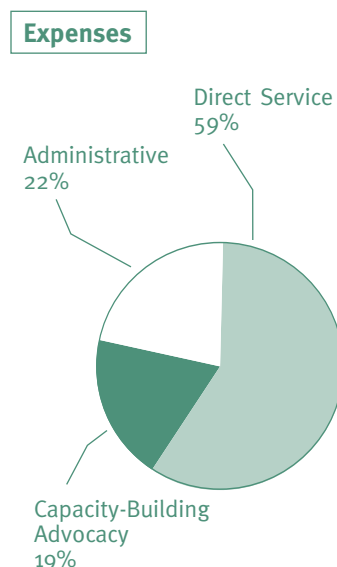
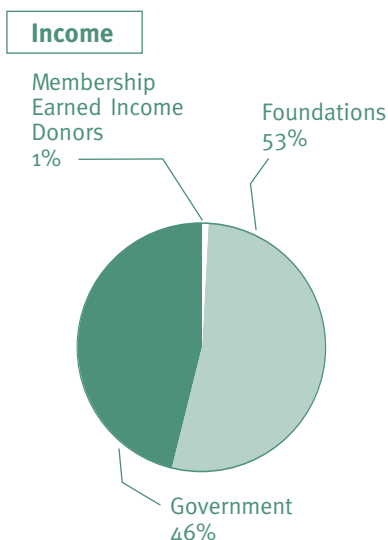
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“FROM THE FIRST DAY I WALKED THROUGH THE DOOR I IMMEDIATELY FELT A SPIRIT THAT MADE ME THINK THAT I WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE. I FELT LIKE THE PEOPLE, STAFF, AND EVERYBODY INVOLVED WERE SO DEDICATED AND SO SINCERE ABOUT THEIR DUTY. . . . THE RESOURCE CENTER HAS ADDED WINGS TO MY SPIRIT.”

– RESOURCE CENTER USER AND U-TURN PERMITTED GRADUATE

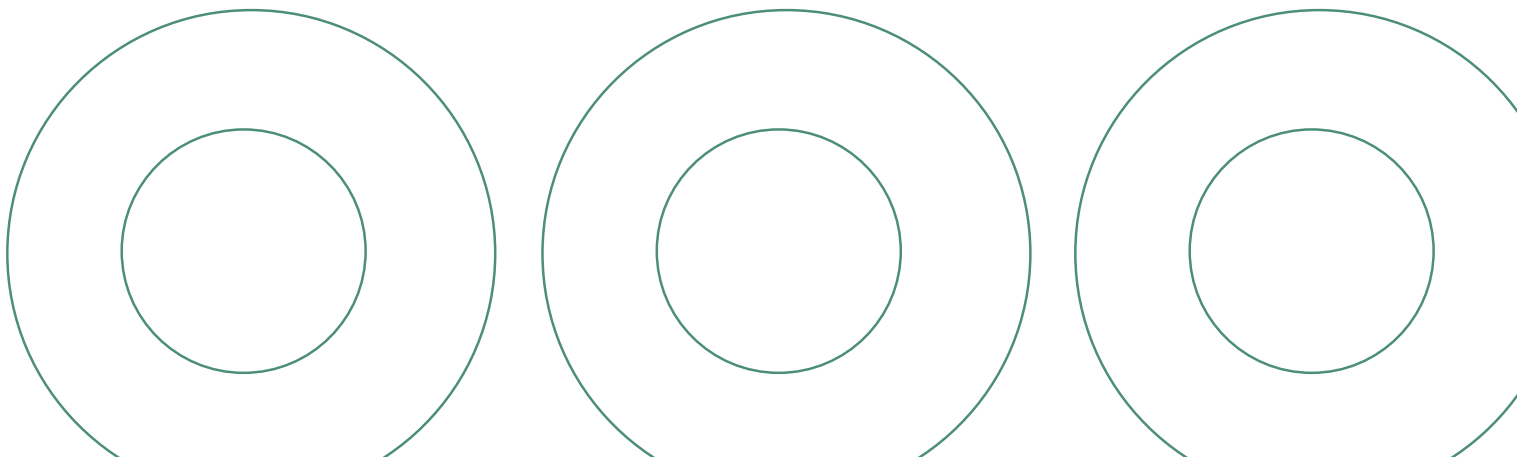
THE COMMUNITY

North Lawndale, a primarily African American community, covers six square miles of Chicago’s West Side. In the 1950s and 1960s, North Lawndale underwent dramatic disinvestment and population decline. By 2000, the North Lawndale unemployment rate was 26 percent and the median household income was \$18,342. In 2001, 57 percent of all North Lawndale adults were involved in the criminal justice system.

In recent years, North Lawndale has become a promising neighborhood in transition with an emerging faith-based network, a thriving community newspaper, and several new housing complexes that include subsidized and market-rate homes and rental units. Through the efforts of committed local organizations, such as Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation, Lawndale Christian Development Corporation, and H.I.C.A., and of its determined residents, North Lawndale has begun to effectively and innovatively respond to its many challenges and to serve as a model for similar communities across the country.

“I HAVE LEARNED THAT THE WORLD DOES NOT OWE ME ANYTHING, THAT I HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD AS MUCH AS I EXPECT TO GET OUT OF THE WORLD, AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS A PLUS OF THE PROGRAM BECAUSE OFTEN TIMES WE BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD OWES US SOMETHING.”

– U-TURN PERMITTED GRADUATE
AND NORTH LAWDALE RESIDENT



“WITH THE U-TURN PROGRAM I LEARNED A LOT ABOUT MYSELF.
I REALLY LEARNED HOW TO SIT BACK, BE PATIENT, LISTEN MORE.
IT GAVE ME A CHANCE TO TAKE AN INVENTORY OF WHAT I HAVE BEEN
THROUGH AND WHERE I WANT TO BE AND HOW TO GET THERE.” – U-TURN PERMITTED CLIENT

programs and activities

The philosophy underlying all Network programs and activities is to serve as a catalyst for joining together the right stakeholders and resources in order to develop innovative services that build ladders of economic advancement for the North Lawndale community. The Network has formalized this role of “catalytic connector” by adopting incubation as its core business model. This means that the Network aims to incubate its direct service programs, while helping to build the capacity of local community partners, eventually handing over the programs to these partners. By adopting this business model, the Network strengthens collaborations with community stakeholders and mobilizes assets to make a difference in the North Lawndale community, Chicago, and the nation.

The North Lawndale Employment Network Resource Center

The North Lawndale Employment Network Resource Center opened in April 2004 in the residential heart of North Lawndale to provide resources for independent job searches, offer financial literacy and computer workshops, and serve as the central access point for all Network programs and referrals to partner agencies. The Resource Center uses the Project Match case management and client tracking model. By the summer of 2004, the Resource Center was serving approximately 70 walk-in North Lawndale clients a month, in addition to individuals already enrolled in Network programming, and usage is rapidly increasing.

Centers for Working Families

In 2004, the North Lawndale Employment Network Resource Center began its affiliation with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Centers for Working Families, enabling the Network to more comprehensively address the needs of families seeking self-sufficiency. Following this model, the Resource Center helps clients secure stable workforce attachment and advancement opportunities, offers financial workshops and access to checking accounts through partnerships with the Center for Economic Progress and Shorebank, and will soon offer access to income supports through a partnership with RealBenefits, which helps people assess their eligibility for public support programs.

U-Turn Permitted Program and the Illinois Going Home Initiative

U-Turn Permitted, previously called the Ex-offender Employment Service Network, provides employment services and case management to formerly incarcerated individuals. It offers individual needs assessments; job readiness training; a referral network; peer group and mentoring support; family-centered re-entry supports for the inmates, family members, and significant others; and job placement and follow-up services. The Network also develops partnerships with employers to help clients secure and retain jobs. The employment placement rate for program completers is 85 percent. The new program name sends a symbolic message to partners and clients: radical, positive changes in people’s lives are possible when the right opportunities are available.

In 2002, the federal government awarded the three-year, \$2 million Illinois Going Home grant to the Network, TASC, the Institute of Clinical Social Work, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), and other community partners. This grant was awarded to these partners to provide re-entry services to 200 of the hardest-to-serve returning offenders. Adopting the U-Turn Permitted model and providing its network of services, the Going Home initiative also enables participants to begin their re-entry process while still incarcerated, through IDOC services and special Transition Teams, which include parole officers, TASC case managers, and Network staff.

Building Beyond!

Building Beyond! is an intensive 11-week job readiness program that prepares out-of-school young adults between the ages of 17 and 24 to enter the workforce and become successful, self-sufficient, and active citizens. Students learn life skills, job readiness, and basic computer use, with an emphasis on communication and customer service skills. The pre-employment training, career education, and job placement assistance help integrate youth into the workforce and prepare them to begin careers of their own.

“THE NETWORK IS MAKING THE NORTH LAWDALE COMMUNITY BETTER BY HELPING RESIDENTS SECURE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING. IT IS SETTING AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE BY WORKING WITH THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED AND BY GIVING THEM HOPE AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO EARN AN HONEST LIVING FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.”

– COMMUNITY LEADER

Business Relations and Innovations

The Network develops partnerships with employers to help secure jobs for its clients and to help them retain those jobs. An important example of this work is the program with Advocate Trinity Hospital, which trains U-Turn Permitted graduates and places them directly into hospital jobs with family-supporting wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities. This partnership is expanding to include the entire Advocate Health Care system. The Network also partners with the Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation, a community development group formed in 1981 to help retain and expand local businesses by providing assistance with loan processing, city services, job training programs, business development incentives, export and trade information, and access to technology and modernization resources. The Network also works with about 60 other employers to directly place clients in full-time, permanent employment.

Sweet Beginnings

Another business innovation is the Network's own transitional employment initiative, a North Lawndale-based urban farming and honey production business called Sweet Beginnings, established with funding from the Illinois Department of Corrections and the City of Chicago. Launched in the summer of 2004 with 40 beehives, Sweet Beginnings employs formerly incarcerated individuals who work 30 paid hours a week and receive on-the-job training and mentoring in landscaping, beekeeping, food processing, and sales and distribution, along with appropriate certification training. They each spend time tending the bees, harvesting honey, planting and tending the gardens, processing foods with honey, and selling products through farmer's markets and other outlets. Sweet Beginnings has developed a product name, Beeline, and sells honey at the Green City and Oak Park Farmers Markets.

Advocacy and Policy Partnerships

The Network engages in many important advocacy activities. It provided needed support and information to County Commissioner Bobbie Steele to help her pass the 2004 Cook County Ordinance establishing the Re-entry Employment Demonstration Pilot Program. Through this program, 100 first-time, non-violent offenders who complete the U-Turn Permitted program will become eligible for 12-month paid county internships.

Through the Going Home initiative, the Illinois Department of Corrections provides inmates with community-based re-entry services before their release at the Adult Transition Center close to their home addresses. IDOC is seriously considering broadening these important practices beyond the Going Home participants as a result of this program and the Network's advocacy.

Network Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber works with the Mayor's Policy Caucus on Prisoner Re-entry and participates in other policy forums, including the State Workforce Investment Board Ex-offender Employability Task Force, Seventh District Congressman Danny Davis' Ex-offender Taskforce, Governor Rod Blagojevich's Re-entry and Public Safety Taskforce, and the Congressional Black Caucus. In June 2004, Brenda Palms Barber participated in an Urban Institute roundtable discussion of re-entry strategies. The Urban Institute has also cited U-Turn Permitted as a best practice in its research on community-based re-entry.

The Center for Impact Research and the Network are partnering on an action research project to help North Lawndale residents better understand the judicial system and to advocate for changes in sentencing policies. Funded by the Woods Fund of Chicago, the Alternatives to Incarceration project trains residents to research judicial policy and decision-making about alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent drug-related offenses.

“THERE WAS JUST NOTHING OUT HERE THAT WOULD SUPPORT AN EX-OFFENDER OR ANYTHING THAT WOULD SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO MADE MISTAKES IN THE PAST, UNTIL I GOT INTRODUCED TO THE NORTH LAWDALE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK” – U-TURN PERMITTED GRADUATE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sheila Barber
North Lawndale Resident

Cerathel Burnett
Carole Robertson Center for Learning

Margaret Davis
Healthcare Consortium of Illinois

Donna Ducharme
The Delta Institute

Sam Flowers
H.I.C.A.

Tiffany Hamel
World Business Chicago

Sylvia Houston
North Lawndale Resident

Davis Jenkins
*University of Illinois at Chicago
Great Cities Institute*

Val Jordan
Breaking Ground

Richard Kordesh
The Blue House Institute, Inc.

Kevin McCauley
Westside Job Collaborative

Brenda Mitchell
Advocate Bethany Hospital

Debra Wesley Freeman
Sinai Community Institute

Spruiell White
*The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur
Foundation*

Feranda Williamson
Malcolm X College

Bob Wordlaw
Chicago Jobs Council

Brenda Palms Barber (ex-officio)
North Lawndale Employment Network

STAFF

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Virginia Mendenhall, Finance Director

Mosi Mwamba, Data Collection Specialist

Ryan Hollon, Project '55 Fellow

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Elaine Austin, Office Assistant and Project Match Case Manager

U-Turn Permitted

Anthony Elliott, Client Services Manager

Bernice Haynes, Client Services Manager

Building Beyond!

Cleophus Lee, Client Services Manager

Economic Advancement and Innovation

Tom Wetzel, Director of Business Relations and Innovations

Julian Macklin, Employment Coordinator

FUNDERS AND DONORS

Alphawood Foundation

Bank One

Brook Furniture Rental

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Chicago Community Trust

Chicago Empowerment Zone

Chicago Foundation for Women

Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, Community Development Block Grant and Workforce Investment Act

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

John Lloyd Fry Foundation

Harris Bank Foundation

Hitachi Foundation

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Illinois Department of Corrections

Information Technology Resource Center

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

McCormick Tribune Foundation

New Prospect Foundation

Polk Bros. Foundation

Project Match

Renaissance Women

SBC Foundation

Steans Family Foundation

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

University of Illinois at Chicago
Jane Addams College of Social Work

Woods Fund of Chicago

MEMBERSHIP

To become a member of the North Lawndale Employment Network, call (773) 638-1825 or visit the Web site: www.nlen.org. Membership can connect you to more than 100 businesses, service providers, and community leaders in North Lawndale and Chicago, and give you the opportunity to help develop the North Lawndale community.



North Lawndale Employment Network
3726 West Flournoy Street
Chicago, Illinois 60624
(773) 638-1825