Chicago

AdvancingCities Year 1

West Side United

Employee Professional Pathways and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool Programs

Report Period: April 2019 – March 2020
About the evaluators

WSU has engaged the services of Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) to serve as external evaluators of its AdvancingCities initiatives – the Employee Professional Pathways and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool programs. SUHI is part of Sinai Health System and is known for its work in designing and implementing community health programs, conducting health equity research, and providing evaluation services. Learn more about SUHI at https://www.sinai.org/content/sinai-urban-health-institute-0.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

West Side United

Life expectancy on Chicago’s West Side, comprising largely low-income communities of color, is up to 14 years lower than in the wealthier downtown Loop neighborhood just five miles away. Barriers contributing to disparities in health and wellness across the West Side include social factors related to health, such as structural racism and inequitable access to education, employment, income, and food.

West Side United (WSU) is a collaborative of healthcare, community, and business institutions that formed to improve health and wellbeing by addressing the social determinants of health. WSU uses a multi-sector approach that considers the unique histories and needs of West Side communities. Its leadership includes representatives from six partner hospitals – AMITA Health, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, Cook County Health, Rush University Medical Center, Sinai Health System, and University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences – and from the communities it serves.

WSU has an overarching goal of decreasing the life expectancy gap between Chicago’s West Side and the Loop by 50% by 2030.

WSU takes collaborative, community-driven action across its four interconnected impact areas with the aims of improving wellbeing and increasing life expectancy among West Side residents.

Economic Vitality

To achieve its mission of building health and wellness on Chicago’s West Side, WSU works with its six partner hospitals to use and combine financial resources in ways that create economic vitality among West Side residents. WSU’s focus on economic wellbeing is a direct response to findings from community listening sessions conducted in 2017 and 2018 that emphasized economic disparities as drivers of poor health.

WSU’s economic initiatives aim to build a thriving West Side by creating economic opportunity for residents, increasing hospital workforce representation from the West Side, and developing a self-sustaining business community. Two of WSU’s economic programs established in 2018 are the Employee Professional Pathway (EPP) and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG). The EPP is a career pathway program for full-time, low-wage hospital staff seeking higher-level clinical and IT positions that offer greater pay and opportunity. The SBG is funded by WSU partner hospitals and other invested stakeholders to provide grants to small businesses serving the West Side. WSU used JPMorgan Chase (JPMC) AdvancingCities funding to expand these two programs.
West Side United’s Evaluation Approach
WSU uses traditional evaluation as well as rapid assessment approaches to track progress towards its life expectancy goal. Rapid assessment approaches use real-time data on a recurrent basis to understand program elements that are successful and identify elements that fail to meet program aims. In response to findings, WSU teams work with stakeholders and community representatives to brainstorm program and/or system changes that may increase effectiveness. After implementing these changes, WSU re-assesses the data to see if results improved, and the process continues. By promoting a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement through rapid assessment approaches, WSU hopes to develop solutions that create health equity and increase life expectancy on the West Side more quickly.

AdvancingCities Program Progress
Using its evaluation approach as a guide, WSU, along with evaluators from Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI), EPP and SBG partners, and the AdvancingCities team, developed a multi-year plan to assess the impact of EPP and SBG. The first year focused on understanding methods used to expand and improve the existing EPP and SGB programs. In addition to establishing data collection processes for assessing outcomes in years two and three, evaluators attended and observed meetings, reviewed documents and presentations, and met with key program staff members and stakeholders to understand the most critical takeaways from this year of expansion. The following highlights key findings for each program, as well as overarching findings across programs.

Employee Professional Pathways
The EPP provides career training to low-wage hospital employees so that they can move into clinical positions with higher pay and growth opportunities. In addition to benefiting participants and West Side residents, the EPP offers hospitals an opportunity to fill high-demand clinical and IT roles with existing staff. EPP’s overarching goals are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increase hospital <strong>workforce diversity</strong> by race/ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increase hospital <strong>workforce representation</strong> from WSU communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Create greater <strong>economic opportunity and wealth</strong> for low-income individuals and people of color living in West Side neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EPP includes four career pathways. WSU piloted the Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP) and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Pathway in 2018. WSU is using AdvancingCities funding to expand these two career pathways and to develop the Health IT and Nursing Pathways.

Participants within each career pathway complete coursework, earning credentials so that they can advance professionally, while working full-time to retain their current pay and benefits. Once they graduate and receive certification, participating hospitals interview career pathway participants as candidates for positions that are specifically reserved for the EPP.
**Employee Professional Pathways - Year 1 Progress**

Over the past year, participants successfully enrolled in and graduated from the CNA Pathway and MAPP. WSU continued to develop the Health IT and Nursing Pathways. The first Health IT cohorts will launch later this year and the Nursing Pathway will launch in 2021. WSU developed and launched its Readiness Program for MAPP applicants over a year ahead of schedule in order to address enrollment challenges and partnered with local service providers to centralize EPP's application process and offer wraparound supports to participants (e.g., professional development sessions, individual coaching).

From April 2019 to March 2020, a combined 916 individuals applied to the CNA Pathway and MAPP, and 60 were enrolled (for career pathway-level details, see figure below). As of March 2020, 12 CNA participants had started new jobs as Patient Care Technicians (PCTs) at Rush University Medical Center.

The EPP team continued to address several systems issues by collaborating with WSU partner hospitals and leveraging local training partners. The EPP aims to fill high-demand clinical roles at WSU's partner hospitals by providing innovative and accessible training to existing low-income employees. Expanding this training required that WSU address issues such as piecemeal hospital and educational application processes and hospital tuition reimbursement programs that fail to cover readiness and remediation courses. This year, WSU worked with hospital and educational partners and two local training providers – Skills for Chicagoland’s Future (Skills) and One Million Degrees (OMD) – to centralize the application processes for CNA and MAPP. WSU continued to pursue hospital reimbursement policy changes that better serve program participants. Additional details about progress begin on page 11 of this report.

In the past year, WSU addressed several challenges that created barriers to applicant and participant success. By addressing these challenges, WSU identified a set of lessons learned.

**Employee Professional Pathways - Year 1 Lessons Learned**

**Flexibility is critical to success.** Implementing a systems-oriented, responsive, and tailored program like EPP requires flexibility from program management, stakeholders, and funders to address unique hospital needs and to respond to emerging issues. In Year 1, the team faced unanticipated challenges in identifying applicants who met placement exam criteria. **Case Study 1** (page 15) explains how the WSU team used data and rapid response to address these challenges and meet applicant needs.

**Use the data for rapid improvement.** WSU is committed to using real-time data to understand effective program elements and to identify areas in need of change. Using this approach with EPP has resulted in more rapid program improvement than would be possible using traditional evaluation methods.
Collaborate with experienced partners. WSU can respond to emerging participant needs because of its strong relationships with trusted, experienced partners.

Incorporate key pathway attributes to ensure success. To promote a career pathway program, it is important to understand what makes it appealing to potential participants and healthcare institutions. For WSU, career pathways that focus on certification and provide quick wins to participants and employers are key to retention and buy-in.

Wraparound supports are necessary. Educational opportunities alone are not enough to guarantee participant success. When designing a program such as the EPP, it is important to consider all aspects of participants’ lives that impact their ability to complete required coursework.

Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool
To develop a stronger, self-sustaining local business community and increase economic opportunities for people living in West Side neighborhoods, WSU established the Small Business Grants Accelerator Pool (SBG). West Side United (WSU) is using AdvancingCities funding to expand SBG, which provides small business owners on Chicago’s West Side equity through grants and technical assistance. The SBG focuses on for-profit businesses, which often have less access to grant funding than non-profits. Through grant-giving, the SBG aims to facilitate business growth and stability, which in turn will lead to more local job opportunities for West Side residents to increase their own wealth. Technical assistance increases the competitiveness of businesses to obtain hospital contracts, with the aim of establishing businesses as key contributors to hospital supply chains.

Program Goals
✓ Develop **stronger, self-sustaining local business community**
✓ Greater **economic opportunity and wealth** for low-income individuals and people of color in WSU neighborhoods

Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool - Year 1 Progress
This year, WSU successfully awarded nearly $500,000 in grants to a group of for-profit small businesses serving the West Side (start-ups and established businesses). WSU’s engagement of partners, such as community organizations that offer technical assistance, was essential to SBG’s expansion. Notable program improvements included an enhanced outreach process, the incorporation of community members in grantee selection, and the use of new mechanisms to expand small business awareness of technical assistance opportunities. Further, the team began connecting small businesses with hospital supply chains by making hospital reimbursement processes more business-friendly and increasing the visibility of funded small businesses to partner hospitals.

In September and October of 2019, WSU held seven community information sessions across West Side communities to inform local business owners of the 2020 funding cycle, delineate selection criteria, and answer applicant questions. The sessions were offered in English and Spanish. The information sessions for the 2019/20 funding cycle attracted 463 applicants, over four times the amount as in the 2018/19 pilot cycle. The selection committee, including community representatives and funders, ultimately chose 29 businesses to fund (19 start-up and 10 established).
With its unique and collaborative approach, the SBG addresses various systems and environmental issues that prevent West Side small businesses from thriving. In particular, the program provides financial capital to for-profit businesses that does not need to be paid back. This helps for-profit businesses build equity so they can pursue more traditional forms of financing. Further, the program creates new connections between businesses and technical assistance providers and aims to generate contracts between businesses and WSU hospitals. Importantly, the program engages residents in grantee selection, ensuring that communities have a say in who receives funding.

The program was not without challenges, and addressing these barriers led to the development of several lessons learned.

### Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool - Year 1 Lessons Learned

**Flexibility is critical to success.** As with all WSU programs, SBG uses data to understand effective program elements and identify areas for improvement. Being ready for and having funders that are open to rapid change allows the program to operate more efficiently (see Case Study 2 on page 29).

**Fund for-profit businesses.** The large number of small businesses that applied for 2020 funding highlighted a greater need than originally anticipated. Undoubtedly, the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will create even more demand in coming years. WSU is aggressively pursuing additional funding to increase the grant pool in response to the need for additional opportunities.

**Consider needs of Spanish-speaking small business owners.** To reach WSU’s target communities, SBG outreach and application materials must be accessible to Spanish-speaking small business owners. During the 2019/20 funding cycle, not all marketing was done in both English and Spanish. Next year, all outreach materials will be available in Spanish as soon as the application period begins.

**Assess business success and long-term growth.** WSU plans to use business outcomes data to understand factors other than revenue, profit, and employment that make a business successful (e.g., adoption of new technologies). Understanding these factors will help WSU assess future applications and improve understanding of business owner needs.

**Don’t forget post-selection follow-up.** WSU is developing strategies beyond grant-giving to prepare businesses for long-term success. Only 11% of applicants engaged with free business coaching services this year. Next year, WSU will actively follow-up with more businesses and may require funded businesses to work with Accion, a technical assistance partner, to create a business plan.

### Chicago AdvancingCities Key Takeaways

Three key takeaways emerged during this first year of expansion.

**Importance of collaboration and partnership.** WSU successfully expanded the EPP and SBG because of its strong relationships with a broad set of multi-sector industry and community partners. First, the scale of WSU’s programming is made possible through its unique collaboration of six partner hospitals. Each unique hospital would have needed to build considerable infrastructure to support EPP and SBG individually; however, by combining resources, they were able to pursue more efficient joint programs. WSU benefits from the support of local and national funders that provide flexible funding, which allows
WSU to tailor programs to participant needs. Further, WSU can provide wraparound support to EPP and SBG participants because of its strong partnerships with organizations that have topic-matter expertise in areas like workforce development, education, training, and business development. Regardless of initiative size, collaboration and partnership are key to success, and for smaller programs, may be necessary to scale-up effective projects. Hospitals are in a unique position to build economic impact by contracting local businesses as vendors. Any sized workforce development program or business grant program will benefit from collaborating with experts in education, training, and business development.

**Centricity of community.** WSU views West Side community members and organizations as experts on neighborhood needs and wellbeing. To ensure its programming is meaningful to residents and complements existing community efforts, WSU incorporates community member and organization feedback into all activities. In particular, WSU Community Advisory Council (CAC) members – 18 residents of WSU communities – serve not only on the CAC, but also across all WSU initiative working groups and the WSU Steering Committee. Working group members advise all WSU programming. The leadership of community members comes through in programmatic decisions for both EPP and SBG. In particular, the SBG selection committee included five community members with experience owning and/or serving West Side small businesses. To incorporate community voice, smaller initiatives do not necessarily need an 18-person CAC; teams can identify feasible and sustainable ways to engage community members and leaders that best meet their individual program needs.

**Value of rapid improvement approaches.** Activities over the past year demonstrate the value of WSU’s rapid assessment approach in program improvement. Within the EPP and SBG, WSU used real-time data to understand where programs fell short and quickly responded with targeted changes. The following report delineates two case studies explaining how WSU put this approach into action (see **Case Study 1** and **Case Study 2**). In an early EPP cohort, a significant proportion of MAPP applicants failed to meet placement exam requirements; therefore, the team designed and implemented its Readiness Program over a year earlier than planned. The SBG team reinvigorated its outreach processes based on 2018/19 data. The changes resulted in more than four times as many applications in 2019/20 versus 2018/19. Within both programs, the WSU team responds to findings from the data – good and bad – and to broader external challenges – such as the COVID-19 pandemic – to improve outcomes for participants and businesses over time.

**Looking Forward**

During the second year of AdvancingCities funding, WSU will continue to develop and improve EPP and SBG using successful approaches identified during this first year. WSU has already begun modifying its programming to respond to emerging participant and business needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in Spring 2020, WSU, JPMC, and Accion awarded $10,000 micro emergency grants to 11 funded SBG businesses to offset losses due to reduced employee hours and income. In addition, evaluators will begin examining outcomes among participants and businesses, highlighting which characteristics, services, and supports are most strongly related to participant success. Evaluation activities will aim to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on program approaches and participant/business success, and more broadly, begin discerning the paths by which the EPP and SBG may lead to broader economic vitality across the West Side.
Introduction

West Side United

Life expectancy on Chicago’s West Side, largely comprising low-income communities of color, is up to 14 years lower than in the wealthier downtown Loop neighborhood just five miles away (Figure 1). Barriers to health and wellness in West Side neighborhoods stem from social factors related to health, such as structural racism and inequitable access to education, employment, income, and food.

Figure 1. Life Expectancy in West Side Communities Compared to the Loop (2017, Chicago, IL)

[Map showing life expectancy in West Side communities comparing to the Loop.]


West Side United (WSU) is a social justice collaborative of healthcare, community, and business institutions that formed to improve health and wellbeing on Chicago’s West Side by focusing on the social determinants of health. Using a cross-sector and place-based approach, WSU addresses racial and geographic health inequities across four impact areas: Health and Healthcare, Economic Vitality, Neighborhood and Physical Environment, and Education (Figure 2). Underpinning these four impact areas is a deep commitment to eliminating structural racism and its impacts on West Side residents. WSU leadership includes representatives from six partner hospitals – AMITA Health, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago (Lurie), Cook County Health, Rush University Medical Center (Rush), Sinai Health System (Sinai), and University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences (UI Health) – and local organizations and residents. The WSU collaborative also teams with healthcare providers, educators, businesses, faith communities, and local government. WSU serves over 550,000 West Side residents.

WSU has an overarching goal of decreasing the life expectancy gap between Chicago’s West Side and the Loop by 50% by 2030.
WSU views West Side community members and organizations as experts on neighborhood needs and wellbeing. To ensure its programming is meaningful to residents and complements existing community efforts, WSU engages West Side residents as partners and leaders in all work, aiming to build partnership across sectors and magnify impact through collaboration. This is evidenced in the establishment of the WSU Community Advisory Council (CAC) – 18 residents of WSU communities – which ensures community members have a say in WSU’s priorities and strategic decisions. In particular, CAC members serve not only on the CAC, but across all WSU initiative working groups and the WSU Steering Committee. Working group members advise all WSU programming and WSU incorporates essential input from the CAC members when making programmatic decisions.

**Social Justice Approach to Health Equity**

West Side residents face challenges across the four impact areas due to ongoing systematic racism and historic community disinvestment fueled by racist policies and institutions. Median household income in eight of the ten WSU communities is less than that of Chicago ($52,497), ranging from $24,055 to $46,761. In eight communities, fewer than 80% of adults have high school diplomas (ranging from 51% to 79%), and in four communities, violent crime is more than double that of Chicago.

WSU believes that if collaborative action is taken to achieve racial and geographic equity across its interconnected impact areas, residents will see improvement in their overall wellbeing and life expectancy. The Chicago Department of Public Health’s Healthy Chicago 2025 Community Health Improvement Plan also aligns with this focus on the social and economic determinants of health. Healthy Chicago 2025 aims to reduce citywide life expectancy disparities by taking an equity approach that targets the conditions in which people live.

Further, the City’s Solutions Toward Ending Poverty Policy Agenda also adopted WSU’s approach. The common focus on improving living conditions and health equity across these large organizations increases the likelihood of impactful initiatives and positive outcomes for Chicago’s West Side residents.

**Economic Vitality**

WSU’s economic initiatives aim to build a thriving West Side by creating economic opportunity and wealth for residents, increasing hospital workforce representation from the West Side, and developing a self-sustaining business community. To achieve its mission of building community health and economic wellness on Chicago’s West Side, WSU focuses on fast-tracking hospitals’ use of financial resources to increase economic vitality. Through this strategy, WSU develops initiatives to: (1) hire more people from...
the West Side, providing stable, well-paying jobs; (2) increase internal hospital opportunities for West Siders and provide support (e.g., personal finance, childcare) to enable them to succeed; (3) target small business grants to companies that can join the hospital supply chain; (4) shift prioritized procurement categories to the West Side, supporting local businesses and creating jobs; and, (5) invest in development projects on the West Side, providing access to capital for larger community projects.

Specifically, WSU’s economic initiatives include: a streamlined career pathway program for full-time, low-wage hospital staff to become higher-paid clinical and IT professionals; hospital- and partner-funded small business grants; and, hospital procurement strategies that source equipment and services locally. WSU originally identified these programs after conducting 46 listening sessions across the West Side to understand community health needs in 2017 and 2018. During these sessions, residents and community stakeholders specifically asked for initiatives targeting economic wellbeing, including employment and business owner opportunities. WSU expects that enhanced financial stability and accumulation of wealth among residents will improve factors like access to healthy food and preventive health care, resulting in increased wellbeing and health.

**AdvancingCities Grant Programs**

Two of WSU’s economic programs established in 2018 are the Employee Professional Pathway (EPP) and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG). The EPP is a career pathway program for full-time, low-wage hospital staff seeking higher-level clinical and IT positions that offer greater pay and opportunity. The SBG is funded by WSU partner hospitals and other invested stakeholders to provide grants to small businesses serving the West Side. WSU utilized JPMorgan Chase (JPMC) AdvancingCities funding to expand these two programs.

**West Side United’s Evaluation Approach**

WSU developed a three-tiered assessment framework in response to the need for a comprehensive infrastructure that connected WSU’s initiatives and programs, including EPP and SBG, with its overarching goal to reduce the life expectancy gap. The framework aims to understand the collective impact of WSU by measuring progress across three measurement “tiers” that span from the community-to the impact area- to the initiative-level (Tiers I, II, and III, respectively) (Appendix 2). Throughout the AdvancingCities grant period, WSU will assess population-level changes across Tiers I and II as part of ongoing collaborative activities. Indicators and progress will be available on WSU’s online dashboard (https://westsideunited.org/our-impact/metrics-dashboard/).

In addition to traditional evaluation, including tracking indicators at all tiers of the assessment framework, WSU uses rapid assessment approaches to track progress towards its life expectancy goal. Rapid assessment approaches use real-time data on a recurrent basis to understand program elements that are successful and identify elements that fail to meet program aims. In response to findings, WSU teams brainstorm with stakeholders and community representatives to develop program and/or system changes that may increase effectiveness. After implementing changes, WSU re-assesses to determine if results improved, and the process continues. By promoting a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement through the assessment framework and rapid improvement approaches, WSU hopes to develop solutions that create health equity and increase life expectancy on the West Side more quickly.
AdvancingCities Evaluation Progress in Year 1

Using its assessment framework (Appendix 2) and rapid assessment approach as guides, WSU, along with external evaluators from Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) (https://www.sinai.org/content/sinai-urban-health-institute-0), EPP and SBG partners, and the AdvancingCities team, developed a multi-year plan to assess the impact of EPP and SBG using a variety of data (Appendix 3). The first year focused on understanding methods used to expand and improve the existing EPP and SGB programs. In addition to establishing data collection processes for assessing outcomes in years two and three, evaluators attended and observed meetings, reviewed documents and presentations, and met with key program staff members and stakeholders to understand critical takeaways from this year of expansion. The following report highlights key findings for each program, as well as findings across programs.

The information outlined in Appendix 3 will be synthesized to answer the national and local research questions highlighted in Table 1 over the course of AdvancingCities funding (March 2019 through April 2022). The following report synthesizes findings from the first year, focusing on understanding the methods used to expand and improve existing EPP and SGB programs by: collaborating with multi-sector partners; incorporating community member and organization feedback into program decisions; and, using a rapid assessment approach to monitor and improve the programs. The report also includes descriptions of the EPP and SBG, highlighting program development and goals; explaining progress made on internal and external systems change; and, outlining successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

### Table 1. West Side United AdvancingCities National and Local Evaluation Research Questions (RQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ Number (Focus Area)</th>
<th>National Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Chicago Research Question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1 (Outputs)</td>
<td>How does WSU use the AdvancingCities grant?</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| RQ 2 (Outcomes)        | How and to what extent does WSU increase economic opportunity for underserved populations? | EPP-RQ2a: Overall and by career pathway, what intervention activities contribute most to participant success (defined as higher wages, increased earning potential, obtaining a new position, and higher retention)? Are solutions to address barriers that are pursued by the EPP reducing challenges for participants and contributing to their success?
|                        |                                                                                             | EPP-RQ2b/SBG-RQ2: As WSU is focused on improving overall life expectancy and wellbeing, explore the ways in which programming enhances participant and grantee wellbeing (e.g., emotional wellbeing, self-efficacy, confidence, sense of purpose, self-reported life skills), beyond current outcomes indicators. |
| RQ 3 (Internal Systems Changes) | How and to what extent does WSU achieve meaningful internal systems change? | EPP-RQ3: Develop, refine, and test an internal systems change framework for hospital-driven career pathways that identifies the domains of internal systems change (both within hospitals and across partners) required for building a successful program. |
| RQ 4 (External Systems Changes) | How and to what extent does WSU achieve meaningful external systems change through better-aligned and integrated systems? | Not applicable.                                                                            |
| RQ 5 (Processes)       | What processes did WSU use to implement its grants?                                          | EPP-RQ5/SBG-RQ5: What is the utility of an assessment and learning approach that uses real time data to target rapid quality improvements to programs? What actions did the rapid assessment approach produce and how did these changes result in improved program outcomes? |
Employee Professional Pathways

Background
West Side United’s (WSU) six partner hospitals employ over 43,000 people and hire approximately 6,000 annually. In fiscal year 2018, just 11% of partner hospital employees and 15.7% of new hires were West Side residents. To increase West Side community representation and racial and ethnic diversity within hospital workforces and to increase economic opportunities for West Side residents, WSU and partner hospitals developed the Employee Professional Pathways program (EPP). Hospitals often need employees to fill higher-level clinical and IT positions, but the pool of qualified candidates, particularly those from local communities, is small and highly competitive. The partner hospitals identified the EPP as a mechanism to fill these in-demand positions while also providing growth opportunities to new and incumbent low-wage, entry-level employees who could not otherwise obtain training while working full-time. To achieve its aims, the EPP provides career-specific training and education at no cost to participants. In addition, the program considers the unique needs of applicants and participants, offering remedial supports and wraparound services to increase success and retention in higher-wage clinical positions.

WSU is using AdvancingCities funding to expand two existing career pathways – the Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP) and the Certified Nursing Assistant Pathway (CNA) – and to develop two new career pathways – Health IT and Nursing – using the framework in Figure 3. WSU is also developing a Readiness Program that offers applicants remedial training before starting MAPP to improve college entrance exam pass rates and academic skills. Lastly, WSU plans to develop a Career Coaching Program to prepare participants for professional roles.

Figure 3. Employee Professional Pathways (EPP) Development Framework

To be successful, the EPP career pathways follow four guiding principles (Figure 4). These principles help ensure that programming: is available to target populations; enables participants to begin new positions without spending an unrealistic length of time training; and has short-term and sustainable long-term effects on the economic position of participants, and as a result, their communities.

EPP collaborates with local educational partners to create customized courses exclusively for EPP participants, to provide wraparound support to participants (e.g., professional development sessions, individual coaching), and to coordinate programming (e.g., centralized application processes). Due to this coordinated approach, applicants and participants have a single contact to support them throughout the program, providing a seamless and coordinated experience.
Beyond participant-level program activities, WSU works with partner hospitals to update reimbursement and other policies that increase employee access to the EPP. Existing hospital training programs and policies do not meet the needs of full-time workers in entry-level positions that cannot afford to work part-time. Further, hospital reimbursement policies do not strategically engage with other funding sources, such as federal, corporate, and philanthropic organizations to improve training program accessibility for low-wage workers.

**EPP Career Pathways and Readiness Program**

The four EPP career pathways vary in length and college credit value. Career pathways include the Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Health IT, and Nursing Pathways (Table 2).

Table 2. West Side United (WSU) Employee Professional Pathways (EPP) Course Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Weekly Class Hours</th>
<th>Course Duration</th>
<th>Total Credit Hours</th>
<th>Credential Earned</th>
<th>Practicum or Externship Required?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAPP</td>
<td>8 – 12</td>
<td>5 semesters</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Registered Medical Assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>16.5 – 22</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health IT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16 – 20 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Varies&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>9 semesters</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Registered Nurse (ADN or BSN)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAPP: Medical Assistant Pathway Program  
CNA: Certified Nursing Assistant Pathway

<sup>a</sup>Since coursework varies by partner hospital, some participants may earn a formal certification, whereas others will not.

<sup>b</sup>Nursing Pathway participants can finish with their Associate in Applied Science Degree in Nursing (ADN) or continue to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (BSN); length of career pathway will vary accordingly and may take up to nine semesters.

**Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP)**

MAPP is a two-year program available to incumbent, full-time employees in good standing at participating partner hospitals. Participants complete coursework and a clinical externship to gain supervised, hands-on experience before graduation. Participants who successfully complete coursework take the Registered Medical Assistant exam.
Key MAPP Partners
Malcolm X College (MXC) is one of the seven City Colleges of Chicago and offers a variety of health sciences programs, including Medical Assistant training. WSU partnered with MXC to create customized MAPP course cohorts that cater to working EPP participants. This allows participants to take classes with the same group of EPP participants throughout the program and to continue working full-time while they complete their coursework.

One Million Degrees (OMD) is a local educational support expert that offers community college students personal, academic, professional, and financial support to help them graduate. Students that work with OMD learn skills to help them in school and in the workforce after graduation. For MAPP, OMD provides professional development sessions and wraparound supports to participants. Further, when it became clear that navigating the multi-step MAPP application process posed a challenge to applicants, OMD also became the centralized coordinator of MAPP applications – from coordinating the MXC application process to assisting with applicant debt payment plans.

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Pathway
Participants in the CNA Pathway complete Basic Nursing Assistant (BNA) coursework and a clinical externship. Upon successful course completion, graduates take the state competency exam to become a Nursing Assistant certified by the state of Illinois. The CNA Pathway is currently in place at one WSU partner hospital and WSU plans to expand to other hospitals in the future.

Key CNA Partners
WSU partnered with MXC to create customized BNA course cohorts. The first four cohorts were designed for opportunity youth, under- or un-employed 18 to 24-year-olds from the community. Participants take BNA classes in an exclusive EPP cohort, allowing them to begin work and receive supportive services like professional development sessions and mentoring while they complete their coursework.

Skills for Chicagoland’s Future (Skills) helps under- or un-employed job seekers connect with employers in Chicago and Cook County. Skills focuses on assisting workers from Chicago neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and unemployment. Skills has extensive experience in helping matching job seekers with employment opportunities, and their expertise is essential to effectively recruiting youth from the West Side for the CNA Pathway. Skills also coordinates all CNA Pathway activities, including applications, enrollment, course registration, books and supplies, and tutoring.

Health IT Pathway
The Health IT Pathway will offer partner hospital employees the opportunity to develop IT skills and earn IT certifications needed to advance to higher-paying non-clinical roles. Because each partner hospital has unique IT needs, such as different hardware, software systems, and roles, the Health IT Pathway will train hospital-specific cohorts. For example, one hospital will prepare a cohort of its employees to earn their CompTIA A+ certifications for Help Desk roles. Providing quick results for participants and partner hospitals, the Health IT Pathway will focus on certificate-based training that can be completed in less than a year.
**Key Health IT Partners**
National Able Network provides personalized training and support to job seekers, as well as staffing and training resources to businesses. National Able Network specializes in the training and hiring of IT professionals through their Information Technology Sector Center and will provide participants with specialized training for their CompTIA A+ certifications.

**Nursing Pathway**
Within the Nursing Pathway, participants will first earn their Associate in Applied Science Degree in Nursing (ADN) and then have the opportunity to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (BSN). To make the Nursing Pathway accessible to entry-level workers, the EPP team developed a three-step approach: (1) CNA training and certification, (2) Associate in Applied Science Degree in Nursing (ADN), and (3) Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (BSN). Currently, the Nursing Pathway is in development. The EPP team is working through various challenges, including the demanding nature of the coursework, the length of the career pathway (about six years), and the varying credential requirements between partner hospitals. The first cohort will start in 2021.

**Readiness Program**
The Readiness Program will provide MAPP applicants with additional training to prepare them for their placement exams. Applicants qualify for the Readiness Program if they do not pass their initial Math and/or English placement exams that are required to be admitted to MAPP. Applicants may qualify to take one or two sessions, depending on their need for preparation in Math, English, or both. At the end of the session(s), applicants will take their placement exams for a second time (see Readiness Program details in Case Study 1).

**Key Readiness Program Partners**
MXC provides readiness training through their Level UP program. Level UP is an established program designed to reduce the time that students spend taking remedial coursework before placing into and beginning college-level courses. During the program, instructors provide intensive group lessons and tutoring to improve participant Math, English, and college readiness skills.

**Implementation Timeline**
The career pathways are in varying stages of implementation (Figure 5). MAPP Cohort 1 and CNA Cohort 1 began prior to AdvancingCities funding. The CNA Pathway trains multiple cohorts annually, with Cohort 2 graduating in 2019, and Cohorts 3 and 4 starting in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Cohort 5 will begin in August 2020. Additionally, WSU planned to launch the Readiness Program to prepare applicants for placement exams in 2021; however, due to the great need for support, WSU launched the program ahead of schedule in 2020.
Program Aims and Goals

The EPP targets WSU’s overarching Economic Vitality goals to: (1) increase hospital workforce diversity by race/ethnicity; (2) increase hospital workforce representation from WSU communities; and, (3) create greater economic opportunity and wealth for low-income individuals and people of color living in West Side neighborhoods.

EPP Logic Model

Throughout the AdvancingCities grant period and beyond, the WSU team and its evaluators will use the activities, outputs, and outcomes found in the EPP logic model to monitor progress toward WSU’s Economic Vitality goals (Figure 6). The team will also monitor internal and external systems changes (Table 3).
Figure 6. West Side United (WSU) Employee Professional Pathways (EPP) Program Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Program Activities</th>
<th>Outputs for Participants</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcomes for Participants</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Funding: JPMC, partner hospitals, federal funding, and CWFA
Implementation tech assistance from: JPMC, SUHI, CCWP, CWFA, CCA, Skills, OMD
Demonstrated support, coordination, and buy-in from WSU partner hospitals
Partner expertise to achieve goals across program elements | Develop and administer four Career Pathways
Develop/administer Readiness Program and Career Coaching
Provide wraparound supports | Career pathways, Readiness Program, and Career Coaching program created
Recruitment results (# applied/# eligible/# enrolled)
375 enrolled participants
280 participants complete training
110 Readiness Program and Career Coaching participants
$5,930 per participant trained
260 participants placed in related employment at partner hospitals | 260 participants earn credentials/certifications/licensures
$21/hour average hourly wage for employed participants
70% retention at 90 days | Increase hospital workforce diversity by race/ethnicity
Increase hospital workforce representation from WSU communities
Greater economic opportunity for low-income individuals and people of color in WSU neighborhoods |

Contextual Factors
Income and wealth inequality; few opportunities for West Side residents to pursue pathways to higher financial security while working full time; hospitals are largest employer on West Side; WSU is targeting improvements across the social determinants of health; engaged and motivated partner hospitals

JPMC - JPMorgan Chase, SUHI - Sinai Urban Health Institute, CCWP - Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, CWFA - Chicago Workforce Funders Alliance, CCA - Civic Consulting Alliance, Skills - Skills for Chicagoland’s Future, OMD - One Million Degrees, WSU - West Side United
Year 1 Progress

During the first year of AdvancingCities funding (April 2019 through March 2020), WSU continued to expand MAPP and the CNA Pathway, as well as develop the Health IT and Nursing Pathways. The following sections will address Research Questions 1 and 2 (RQ1, RQ2), outlining the outputs and outcomes from the first year (see Measuring Progress – Outputs and Outcomes). The evaluators also assessed progress toward internal and external systems changes to answer Research Question 3 (RQ3, see Measuring Progress – Systems Changes). Case Study 1 addresses EPP Research Question 5 (EPP-RQ5). Detailed research questions can be found in Table 1.

Measuring Progress – Outputs and Outcomes (RQ1 and RQ2)

Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP)

Placement testing and coursework

MAPP Cohort 1 began courses in Fall 2018 (information related to activities that took place prior to April 2019, the beginning of AdvancingCities funding, is not included here). During the first year of AdvancingCities funding, Cohorts 1 and 2 continued and began their coursework, respectively. Applicants for Cohort 3 began the application process and took placement tests. Cohort 3 applicants that did not pass their first round of placement tests started the new Readiness Program, Level UP, in March 2020 (details about the Readiness Program can be found in Case Study 1). Applicants that pass their placement tests after Level UP (or qualified after the first found of placement tests or through previous college coursework) will continue to the final interview in the application process. Outputs and outcomes for the three cohorts are in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

The effects of COVID-19

In March 2020, halfway through the spring semester, the COVID-19 pandemic forced MXC to transition to online classes. Participants in Cohort 1 were completing practicum hours at the time, but hospitals were unable to continue hosting students. The accrediting body for the Medical Assistant program is allowing participants to complete 40 practicum hours using virtual simulations as an alternative to in-person hours. Partner hospitals need to develop plans for Cohort 1 participants who still require more than 40 hours of practicum experience. Cohort 1 participants are also waiting to take the state certification exam since testing sites are closed. Despite the challenge of transition to online classes, Cohort 2 participants are still on track to complete spring semester classes on schedule. MXC planned for Cohort 3 to start coursework in Summer 2020; however, they postponed the start until the start of the Fall semester because of the pandemic.

Wraparound services

In addition to coursework, participants attend professional development sessions and individual mentoring sessions hosted by program partner One Million Degrees. Over the last year, sessions covered financial literacy, giving/receiving feedback, self-care, and stress and time management.
**Figure 7. Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP) Application Results, April 2019 - March 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAPP application and enrollment</th>
<th>Placement testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total applicants*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants that pass initial hospital and MXC applicationsb</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolledc</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Inbound applications for Cohorts 2 and 3
bApplicants from Cohort 2 and 3 before placement testing and final interview
 Participants enrolled in Cohorts 1 and 2
fApplicants’ first placement test attempt when applying for Cohort 2 or 3

**Figure 8. Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP) Program Results, Cohorts 1-3, April 2019 - March 2020**

**Certified Nursing Assistant Career Pathway (CNA)**

**Coursework**
Rush CNA Cohort 1 began in late 2018 and ended in early 2019, before AdvancingCities funding began; information related to activities that took place prior to April 2019 (the beginning of AdvancingCities funding) is not included here. During the first grant year, Rush Cohorts 2 through 4 completed their CNA coursework. These cohorts were open to opportunity youth, under- or un-employed 18 to 24-year-olds from the community. Participants are selected from the applicant pool after completing an intensive screening process that assesses their job readiness, persistence profile, and college readiness, resulting
in a dramatic decrease between the number of that apply and the total that enroll. Rush Cohort 5 will be the first open to both opportunity youth and incumbent hospital employees.

Rush Cohort 2 and 3 participants completed the training program, their placement tests, and were hired and started working at Rush University Medical Center. Rush Cohort 4 participants are due to take their placement tests as soon as possible (see the effects of COVID-19 below). Recruiting for Rush Cohort 5 is underway. Details about the progress of Rush Cohorts 2 to 4 are shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

The effects of COVID-19
Rush Cohort 4 completed their MXC coursework in March 2020. Rush Cohort 4 participants will be able to start working as patient care technicians (PCTs) after they pass state certification exams; however, due to COVID-19, the in-person exams were postponed. Participants will now take their placement exams in July 2020 and begin work shortly thereafter. Skills shifted recruiting for Rush Cohort 5 to an online platform in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Skills also postponed the start of the cohort and will complete the application process in July 2020 so that participants can begin courses in August.

Wraparound services
Skills provides remedial education, professional development, and soft skills training to applicants and participants. Remedial education includes an applicant test prep session prior to the English placement exam at MXC. Skills also provides a one- to two-day boot camp before coursework begins to cover program expectations and give practical advice for managing challenges that could arise during the program, including support resources.
Figure 9. Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Pathway Application Results, Rush Cohorts 2 - 4, April 2019 – March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CNA application, enrollment, and hiring</th>
<th>Placement testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total applicants(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible applicants(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolled (participants)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants that completed training(^c)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants that passed state certification exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants hired as PCTs(^d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>723</td>
<td>90% pass rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>496</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Completed applications  
\(^b\)Applicants before placement testing  
\(^c\)Participants that passed MXC BNA course  
\(^d\)PCT – Patient Care Technician

Figure 10. Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Pathway Program Results, Rush Cohorts 2 - 4, April 2019 – March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating hospitals</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Other supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rush</td>
<td>$15.32</td>
<td>28 Accessed remedial education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program costs $2500</td>
<td></td>
<td>28 Attended case management sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28 Attended professional development sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health IT Career Pathway
As of Spring 2020, there are no outputs or outcome indicators to report for the Health IT Pathway. The first Health IT Pathway cohort is scheduled to begin in September 2020 at Cook County Health.

Nursing Career Pathway
As of Spring 2020, there are no outputs or outcome indicators to report for the Nursing Pathway. WSU is developing the Nursing Pathway for a 2021 launch.
Case Study 1: Level UP – Using Data to Increase Successful MAPP Applications (EPP-RQ5)

WSU uses a rapid assessment approach in all initiatives to understand program elements that are successful and identify elements that fail to meet program aims. Following the first two cohorts, WSU conducted a rapid assessment of the MAPP data, which showed that the greatest obstacle preventing applicants from being accepted into MAPP was placement testing. To enter MXC’s medical assistant training program, applicants must meet minimum placement exam thresholds on the Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) Math and English Reading-to-Write exams or be exempt from placement testing through previous college coursework. With MAPP Cohort 2, less than 25% of the 18 candidates that took the placement tests scored high enough to move forward in the application process. In response to this clear need for placement testing support, WSU developed the Readiness Program ahead of schedule (December 2019 vs. April 2021).

WSU identified a placement exam preparation course as a potential way to increase the proportion of applicants who meet required test score thresholds. After meeting with a variety of local organizations, the team decided that the Level UP program at MXC, an established four-week, free, college prep course was the best fit for EPP and MAPP.

Originally, WSU planned to offer the new MAPP Readiness Program to applicants who did not achieve the required scores on their first placement test, but who achieve a lower score threshold (20 on ALEKS, 4 on English). These individuals would be offered the opportunity to attend up to two sessions of Level UP (eight weeks total) and retake their placement tests. Based on this approach, if Cohort 2 had been offered the Readiness Program and 100% of Level UP participants had passed placement tests, 60% of Cohort 2 applicants would have qualified for MAPP instead of 25%.

Despite this initial plan, in an effort to accept enough participants for Cohort 3 to begin on time, some applicants for Cohort 3 that did not meet the identified score thresholds for Level UP were still given the opportunity to attend Level UP instead of more lengthy remedial courses. Currently, 21 Cohort 3 applicants are completing Level UP. If all Level UP participants pass the second round of placement tests, a cohort of 27 students, the largest MAPP cohort thus far, will begin courses at MXC later this year. As Level UP continues, the WSU team will continue to monitor placement testing performance and implement additional rapid improvements as needed.
Measuring Progress – Systems Changes (RQ3 and RQ4)

WSU pursues various systems changes to create a streamlined, effective EPP program that provides low-wage, full-time, hospital employees realistic pathways to higher-wage positions. Table 3 includes information on key internal systems changes, defined as improvements to how people or an organization operate “behind the scenes,” that WSU seeks to address through the EPP. By tracking systems changes, evaluators will assess Research Question 3 (RQ3, see Table 1). In addition, WSU will assess movement toward target external systems changes, or improvements in how services are provided by a system (not included in Table 3), answering Research Question 4 (RQ4).

Through these systems changes, WSU aims to:

➢ Create cohesive, accessible career pathways across partner hospitals and local training institutions;
➢ Improve new and incumbent employee access to career opportunities, higher-paying positions, and wealth; and,
➢ Improve hospital identification of quality staff (e.g., reduce time to hire).

Measuring Progress – Looking Forward

In the coming year, evaluators will launch data collection activities to assess EPP-specific research questions. During the next year, the evaluators will address Research Questions EPP-RQ2a and EPP-RQ2b (see Table 1) by administering surveys to EPP participants and examining individual-level data, such as wraparound service use and participant outcomes. Evaluators will also conduct participant and stakeholder interviews to understand program impacts on participant wellbeing at a more nuanced level. The survey and interview tools are under review by the Rush University Medical Center Institutional Review Board. These evaluation activities will also assess the progress of systems changes (RQ3 and RQ4).

As the EPP continues, evaluators will address EPP-RQ3 and develop an internal systems change framework to examine the level to which the career pathways are institutionalized. Evaluators will base this on the evidence-based Level of Institutionalization (LoIn) Framework. Institutionalization refers to how ingrained a program is across different subsystems of an organization and is considered an important aspect of a program’s long-term sustainability. The level of EPP institutionalization across partner hospitals will be assessed using a short survey administered at semi-structured interviews with program stakeholders. For details, see Appendix 4. WSU will share findings from these activities in subsequent annual reports.
Table 3. West Side United’s (WSU) Employee Professional Pathways (EPP) Internal Systems Issues and Year 1 Progress (April 2019 – March 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Actions</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Progress in Grant Year 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Issue:</strong> Hospitals have limited or nonexistent partnerships with local educational institutions and service providers, leading to a dearth of programs for employees when they want to grow their skills and advance their careers.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Identified hospitals with willingness to support training for: Medical Assistants, Certified Nursing Assistants, Health IT workers, and Registered Nurses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Local Service Providers</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Thirteen partners are engaged in ongoing program oversight, including WSU, participating partner hospitals, consulting partners, educational partners, and funders. In addition, six partners signed a global MOU for administration of the EPP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Change:</strong> Create new coordinated career pathways across partner hospitals that leverage local training partners: Malcolm X College (MXC), Skills for Chicagoland’s Future (Skills), One Million Degrees (OMD), Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (CCWP), and funders</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>WSU developed its Readiness Program (Level UP) for MAPP applicants in late 2019 in response to a need for increased applicant support in passing college entrance placement tests. MAPP Cohort 3 applicants began the Level UP Readiness Program in March 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify areas of need within hospital systems that are conducive to EPP career pathways and confirm initial hospital partners.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>MAPP Cohort 1 completed their coursework in Spring 2020; MAPP Cohort 2 is completing their first year of training; and, MAPP Cohort 3 applicants are participating in Level UP, with courses starting in Fall 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue and establish official partnerships with educational institutions and partners to support career pathways.</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>Cohorts 2 and 3 completed programming and were hired into CNA positions; Cohort 4 has completed coursework and needs to take state certification exam; Cohort 5 will be open to incumbent workers and is tentatively scheduled to begin in August 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and start Readiness Program (Target: Begin first cohort before April 2021).</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>Because hospital IT needs vary, cohorts will be at the hospital level. The first cohort will begin at Cook County Health in September 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue administration of Medical Assistant Professional Pathway (MAPP).</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>Career pathway in development with a target start date of 2021. Two partner hospitals have agreed to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and expand Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)Pathway (Target: begin first incumbent cohort before April 2020).</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>In development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and start Health IT Pathway (Target: Begin first cohort before April 2021).</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>In development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and start Nursing Pathway (Target: Begin first cohort before April 2022).</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>In development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and start Career Coaching Program (Target: Begin first cohort before April 2021).</td>
<td>Not Started</td>
<td>In development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Issue:</strong> Hospitals had limited capacity to centrally coordinate a program of EPP’s size across service providers and hospitals, which posed a challenge to students trying to navigate training.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Local Service Providers, West Side United</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Actions</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Progress in Grant Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Change</strong>: Improve centralized coordination of student supports (e.g., financial, educational) across service providers and employers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>For MAPP, OMD coordinates the application process across MXC departments, assists with debt payment plans, and provides wraparound supports for students. Skills coordinates the CNA Pathway from recruitment through hiring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralize coordination of student supports across providers and employers.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>For MAPP, OMD provides professional development sessions and individual student coaching. For CNA, Skills provides a 2-day boot camp to prepare students for training and offers student supports, such as mentorship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify partners to provide wraparound supports critical to student success.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Issue</strong>: Existing hospital educational assistance and tuition reimbursement policies do not sufficiently support students who are working full-time while earning credentials, especially those that are unable to pay for their own training up front and wait to be reimbursed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s)</strong>: Hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Change</strong>: Change hospital educational assistance and certificate program reimbursement policies to support students in EPP programs so that policies reflect the circumstances of participants who often cannot pay tuition and fees up-front. Given expected return on investment of EPP career pathways, hospital policies should also consider more generous reimbursement to EPP vs. other training programs.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>WSU has held meetings with hospital HR staff to encourage adoption of reimbursement policies that cover the Readiness Program and remedial coursework, especially because this training is critical to ensuring enough students are able to join the MAPP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change hospital reimbursement policies to cover Readiness Program (currently provided through Level UP) and remediation courses so that applicants who need additional support to pass placement exams can be reimbursed through the hospital. Currently, hospitals do not reimburse for programs and courses that are not part of a certificate or degree program.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>The Health IT Pathway team has begun discussing this issue with invested hospitals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change hospital reimbursement policies to cover training providers that are not universities. For example, in the Health IT Pathway, training providers are not universities.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>The WSU team conducted a return on investment assessment of the Nursing Pathway, which indicated that employers could save up to $35,000 per CNA that completes an Associate in Applied Science Degree in Nursing (ADN) through the program. This is based on the turnover cost per year, turnover rate, and program length. The analysis helped secure initial buy-in for the Nursing Pathway from two hospitals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase reimbursement for career pathways that require release time from work. For example, training within the Nursing Pathway will be so intensive that for certain semesters, individuals will require release time. In addition to continuing full-time pay for participants, policies need to be revised to ensure full benefits.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Issue</strong>: Hospital tuition reimbursement may be insufficient to provide students the wraparound supports needed to succeed within the EPP. <strong>Target System(s)</strong>: Hospital, Foundation, Corporate, Federal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Change</strong>: Achieve a funding composition that allows for program sustainability into the future, including provision of wraparound and other support services.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Actions</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Progress in Grant Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate opportunities to expand the types of expenses that are eligible for</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>The team has broached initial discussions with CCWP about expanding the services covered by incumbent worker training dollars. The current policy discourages covering supportive services and remains unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding, especially those that are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical for the success of incumbent worker career pathways (e.g., Readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program, case management, release time).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage federal workforce dollars and other complementary funding to achieve a</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>WSU secured over $150,000 in additional corporate and philanthropic funding to support EPP programming, including a new staff position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustainable mix of funding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Issue:</strong> Prior to <strong>AdvancingCities</strong> funding, there was</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited data exchange between institutions, making it difficult to share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information and effectively support students and limiting WSU’s ability to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand program progress, needs, and accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Local Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers, West Side United</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Change:</strong> Improve data sharing related to participant</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>WSU worked across partners to determine an agreeable process and list of indicators to be shared by each institution. WSU’s Director of Data and Evaluation will oversee data collection and centralization on WSU servers. Data will be provided at the individual participant level once a Data Use Agreement is signed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career pathway progress between WSU, hospitals, MXC, Skills, and OMD.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify process for centralizing data and improve data sharing across</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Currently, WSU is finalizing a data sharing memorandum of understanding with 10 partners including WSU, participating hospitals, evaluators, educational providers, and program administrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete a signed Data Use Agreement (DUA) between key program partners,</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particularly those involved in <strong>AdvancingCities</strong>-funded program elements.</td>
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</table>
Successes, Challenges, and Solutions

Successes

During the first year of AdvancingCities funding, WSU successfully implemented and expanded the EPP. Twenty-eight (28) CNA and 35 MAPP participants enrolled, with 12 graduating from the CNA Pathway and beginning work as Patient Care Technicians. Five (5) recent CNA graduates are waiting to take their final certification exams and will begin work soon thereafter. WSU expanded partnerships, with OMD and Skills taking on more prominent roles in coordinating EPP career pathways. The team also continued developing the Health IT and Nursing Pathways. The first Health IT cohort will begin in September 2020. WSU also addressed various systems issues, decreasing barriers to administering and accessing training programs.

MAPP Participant Spotlight: Lavonne

Lavonne has worked in the behavioral health field at Holy Cross Hospital within Sinai Health System for the past four years. She started the Medical Assistant Pathway Program in September 2019. Lavonne decided to apply to MAPP because she wanted a career change that would allow her to work closely with doctors and nurses. Prior to applying, Lavonne searched for other programs that she could afford; however, none of the programs she found provided the same flexibility to work fulltime and go to school as MAPP. After starting the program, she also found the added support of program elements like professional development sessions, one-on-one mentor meetings, and group sessions with program staff, particularly helpful to her own success. These sessions help Lavonne put things in perspective and keep her from getting overwhelmed as she balances work, school, and her personal life.

Lavonne expects to finish MAPP in Spring 2021; however, her graduation date may be delayed due to class disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lavonne is excited at the prospect of finishing her program and starting a new career path that offers security and stability. As a long-term goal, she hopes to work in a physician’s office closer to home, so she can shorten her daily commute. If time permits, Lavonne is also considering returning to school for additional certifications.

Challenges and Solutions

The WSU team faced various challenges in implementing the EPP over the past year. The following outlines the most significant challenges and explains how the WSU team leveraged its partnerships, community insights, and data-driven rapid assessment approach to pursue innovative solutions.

➢ Extent of the need for academic remediation among applicants

At EPP’s outset, WSU and participating hospitals did not anticipate the level of support that applicants would need to pass college placement exams. To reach the participation numbers needed to make the EPP effective for both hospitals and participants, applicants need educational training and support before career pathways begin.

To address this need, the WSU team introduced the Readiness Program much earlier than planned (December 2019 vs. April 2021). Details regarding the new approach are outlined in Case Study 1. WSU plans to examine the ability of the Readiness Program to improve pass rates and will adjust programming for future applicants as needed. Complementary to the Readiness Program, the team is
working with hospitals to revise reimbursement policies that do not cover remediation courses when the credits do not apply to a certificate or degree program.

➢ **Complex application processes at educational institutions**
Many MAPP applicants face barriers in completing the MXC application, such as outstanding debt payments, and find the multi-department process confusing to navigate. In response, WSU partnered with OMD to: (1) coordinate the MXC application process for MAPP Cohort 3 and beyond; (2) provide support to applicants with debt barriers; and, (3) offer professional development and individual coaching throughout the program. In addition, WSU and OMD work together to connect participants to resources that help address school debt, such as the Chancellor’s Retention Grant and All Chicago Emergency Fund. The addition of OMD to the team was possible because of the flexibility of AdvancingCities support, which allows the team to pilot new approaches in response to emerging program challenges.

➢ **Unique hospital needs**
Hospitals have unique needs for the Health IT and Nursing Pathways. For Health IT, hospitals have different IT systems, positions, and requirements. For Nursing, some hospitals hire individuals with an ADN whereas others only hire those with a BSN. To address these differences, WSU worked with program HR departments and expert stakeholders to design innovative Health IT and Nursing Pathways that diverge from the MAPP and CNA approaches. For Health IT, WSU is implementing hospital-specific cohorts; and, while still in development, the Nursing Pathway team is working with hospitals that only hire BSNs to place ADNs in nursing roles while they finish their ADN-to-BSN training.

➢ **Nursing Pathway accessibility and systems-level challenges**
Based on the intensive training for a CNA to become an ADN and for an ADN to become a BSN, participants in the Nursing Pathway require more support from hospitals and educational institutions than participants in other EPP career pathways. This year, WSU worked with stakeholders to address these challenges, include (1) working with MXC to develop a unique ADN career pathway that partially accommodates working employees, and (2) collaborating with hospitals to find ways for participants to receive full-time pay and benefits during semesters that require release time. Despite these successes, the revised MXC curriculum still makes it difficult for participants to work full-time. Since the aim of EPP is to provide education while allowing employees to receive full-time benefits and pay, WSU is collaborating with hospitals to find ways for participants to receive pay and benefits while in the program.

**Lessons Learned and Insights**
The first year of AdvancingCities support provided lessons that can inform other career training programs, particularly those pursued by healthcare institutions.

**Lesson One: Flexibility is Critical to Success**
Implementing a systems-oriented and responsive program like EPP requires flexibility from program management, stakeholders, and funders. First, EPP is successful because it is flexible enough to address individual hospital needs while remaining a single program. To design a successful collaborative program, WSU engages individuals from different hospitals and departments, and considers union
involvement, Magnet Hospital status, and unique staffing and training needs across hospitals (as in the case of the Health IT Pathway). Second, to address emerging issues, such as a need for remediation and a Readiness Program (Case Study 1), the team must be able to quickly pivot and identify unique approaches to pilot and test. Critical to program flexibility is funding flexibility. Over the past year, AdvancingCities has allowed WSU to quickly respond to and address emerging issues, leading to greater program success. The spread of COVID-19 and program modifications outlined in this report once again highlights a need for creativity and flexibility in administering a successful program.

**Lesson Two: Use the Data for Rapid Improvement**

WSU is committed to using real-time data to understand effective program components and ones that need modification (for an example, see Case Study 1). However, to access and use data in this fashion, WSU needed to establish a centralized data infrastructure and data sharing plan. For EPP, the WSU Director of Data and Evaluation coordinates individual-level information from across hospitals, educational institutions, and partners, including evaluation surveys and interviews. Data sharing can be complex and requires agreements, which often take significant time to finalize. For other programs wishing to use data in this capacity, WSU recommends starting these data sharing plans as early as possible, ideally during program planning.

**Lesson Three: Collaborate with Experienced Partners**

WSU can respond to emerging participant needs because of its strong relationships with trusted, experienced partners. WSU team members are not experts on the college application process, professional workforce development training, or case management. However, WSU was able to centralize the EPP application process and provide wraparound supports to EPP participants through its partnerships with MXC, OMD, Skills, and others. It is critical to ongoing program success to establish these relationships early and to ensure that funding sources allow for continued partnership.

**Lesson Four: Incorporate Key Pathway Attributes to Ensure Success**

Skills has administered the CNA Pathway since 2018, providing an opportunity to assess which employer attributes are most important to program success. Skills identified the following elements as key for ensuring healthcare career pathways programs are attractive to and retain participants: (1) an attractive job and strong pipeline, (2) a career pathway that provides quick wins for participants and employers, (3) a career pathway focused on certification versus long-term education, (4) engaging all levels of staff at participating hospitals to ensure program buy-in and (5) internal mentorship throughout the program. To the extent possible, WSU considers these attributes in all career pathways. When an attribute is less likely to be met (e.g., the Nursing Pathway will be a longer pathway), the group stresses the built-in steps or “short-term wins” (such as earning the ADN sooner than the BSN) that are also valuable to participants and employers.

**Lesson Five: Wraparound Supports are Necessary**

Since starting EPP, it has become apparent to WSU and stakeholders that educational opportunities alone are not enough to ensure that participants are able to succeed in their training. The MAPP Participant Spotlight highlights the importance of wraparound supports to participant success. The WSU team and participating hospitals did not expect the level of wraparound support that is needed during the application process to ensure that applicants could enter the EPP career pathways. Fortunately, the
data collected on application challenges has allowed WSU to discuss the need for early intervention through programs like Level UP and remediation courses, even before applicants can be accepted into the career pathways.

Further, throughout the application process and subsequent training, participants are not immune to the challenges posed by living in high hardship areas, such as exposure to violence and poverty. When designing a program such as the EPP, it is important to consider all aspects of participants’ lives that may impact their ability to complete the training program. As outlined previously, WSU and its partners continue to evolve their programming to meet these additional participant needs; however, these needs can outweigh the resources of mentoring partners. It can also be challenging to provide wraparound supports due to limited funding for these types of program elements.
Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool

Background
Business ownership is recognized as an important path to creating wealth. Black business owners tend to be wealthier and have faster earnings growth than their peers working for wages or salaries. Small businesses are also important job creators and critical drivers of economic empowerment in their neighborhoods. However, Black and other business owners of color face challenges in starting and growing their businesses, including accessing capital. According to a survey of small and medium-sized business owners in Chicago, Black and Latinx owners applied for smaller loans and were less likely to obtain funding than other business owners. Businesses owned by women and people of color were also more likely to seek funds from friends and family members and rely more heavily on personal funds than others.

To develop a stronger, self-sustaining local business community and increase economic opportunities for people living in West Side neighborhoods, WSU established the Small Business Grants Accelerator Pool (SBG). West Side United (WSU) is using AdvancingCities funding to expand SBG, which provides small business owners on Chicago’s West Side equity through grants and technical assistance. The SBG funds for-profit businesses, which often have less access to grant funding than nonprofits. By providing grants, the SBG aims to increase financial equity among West Side businesses, thus creating an avenue for pursuing traditional financing for continued growth. Business growth will lead to more local job openings, creating opportunities for residents to increase their own wealth and financial security. Technical assistance increases the competitiveness of businesses to obtain hospital contracts, with the aim of establishing businesses as key contributors to hospital supply chains.

Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool Program (SBG)
WSU piloted the SBG in 2018/19, before obtaining JPMorgan Chase funding, by providing $85,000 in grants to seven nonprofit and for-profit small businesses. In its current 2019/20 iteration, SBG provides year-long grants to up to 30 for-profit small businesses each year from 2020 to 2022, leveraging funding from JPMC. The grants are available to both start-ups and established businesses with a total of $500,000 to be dispersed each year. WSU and the SBG selection committee determine individual grant sizes by considering the business type (start-ups with ≤6 months of revenue vs. established with >6 months), annual revenue and profit, and planned use of funds. The selection committee, including representatives from WSU, the WSU Community Advisory Council (CAC), and funding organizations, reviews grant applications each year using criteria established beforehand. While funders select the final grantees, feedback from community members on the selection committee is prioritized and carefully considered. WSU also engages small business development centers to provide technical assistance to businesses during the application process as well as during the grant period. These centers presented to businesses at community information sessions, publicized the SBG program, helped business owners complete applications, and will be available to assist business owners during the grant period and beyond. Going forward, WSU plans to secure commitments from new funders to support a larger pool of grantees and increase the SBG’s impact and sustainability over time.
Key SBG Partners
Accion, a nonprofit lender that invests in and provides coaching, capital and connections to small businesses to create wealth and jobs, provides technical assistance to applicants and funded businesses, gives expert guidance to the program team, and leads the grantee selection process.

Implementation Timeline
During the 2019/20 grant period, WSU publicized the SBG program, collected grant applications, selected businesses to fund, and distributed grants. In the following 2020/21 and 2021/22 grant periods, the team will continue to recruit applicants through the information sessions in summer and fall, then review the applications in late fall. Grants will be distributed every January. WSU will continue to identify additional funding sources with the goals of adding $100,000 in new financing in 2019 and $300,000 annually in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Planning and Implementation Timeline for Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG), 2019-2021

Program Aims and Goals
SBG aligns with WSU’s overarching Economic Vitality goals to: (1) develop a stronger, self-sustaining local business community and, (2) create greater economic opportunity and wealth for low-income individuals and people of color living in West Side neighborhoods.

SBG Logic Model
Throughout the AdvancingCities grant period and beyond, WSU team and its evaluators will use the activities, outputs, and outcomes found in the SBG logic model to monitor progress toward WSU’s Economic Vitality goals (Figure 12). The team will also monitor internal and external systems changes (Table 4).
Figure 12. West Side United (WSU) Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool Program (SBG) Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Program Activities</th>
<th>Outputs for Participants</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcomes for Participants</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding: JPMC, Rush, Northern Trust, Lurie, AMITA, additional funders</td>
<td>Conduct intensive community outreach</td>
<td>Outreach (# info sessions/# attendees)</td>
<td>Increase revenue across SBs by an average of 8% throughout AC grant period</td>
<td>Stronger, self-sustaining local business community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation TA from: JPMC, SUHI, Accion, CCA</td>
<td>Conduct annual grant application process</td>
<td>Recruitment (# applied/# eligible/# selected)</td>
<td>Increase income across SBs throughout AC grant period</td>
<td>Greater economic opportunity for low-income individuals and people of color in WSU neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated support, coordination, and buy-in from WSU partner hospitals</td>
<td>Engage community in application process and decisions</td>
<td>Disperse $1.5M in grants to 75 SBs</td>
<td>Create or retain 75+ jobs for WS residents over the AC grant period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner expertise to achieve goals across program elements</td>
<td>Provide grants to SBs</td>
<td># SBs engaged in coaching/TA (grantee and applicants)</td>
<td>Create additional opportunities for local contractors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide range of coaching/TA to SBs</td>
<td>85% low/moderate-income or vulnerable grantees</td>
<td>Increase SB employee wages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and pursue new funders</td>
<td>Increase amount of funding pool</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Residents engaged in grantee selection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technological advances for businesses</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Contextual Factors**

Income and wealth inequality few opportunities for West Side residents to pursue pathways to higher financial security, strong small business community, but businesses have unmet financial coaching needs and limited equity. West Side United targeting improvements across the social determinants of health; engaged and motivated partner hospitals; complementary WSU initiatives to increase partner hospital procurement from local businesses.

JPMC - JPMorgan Chase, Rush - Rush University Medical Center, Lurie - Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, AMITA - AMITA Health, SUHI - Sinai Urban Health Institute, CCA - Civic Consulting Alliance, TA - technical assistance, SB - small business, AC - AdvancingCities, vulnerable grantees - women, people of color, veterans, immigrants or people with disabilities.
Year 1 Progress
During Year 1 (April 2019 through March 2020), WSU awarded 29 grants to the second SBG cohort and began to collect data to monitor program progress and address evaluation research questions (Table 1). Evaluators used the data gathered thus far to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 (RQ1, RQ2; Measuring Progress – Outputs and Outcomes), Research Questions 3 and 4 (RQ3, RQ4; Measuring Progress – Systems Changes) and SBG Research Question 5 (SBG-RQ5; see Case Study 2).

Measuring Progress – Outputs and Outcomes (RQ1 and RQ2)
WSU staff intentionally planned SBG’s 2019/20 outreach campaign to ensure a transparent, accessible, and equitable selection process - expanding upon the 2019/18 approach by offering materials in English and Spanish, engaging a wider network of partners in identifying and selecting businesses, and including five WSU Community Advisory Committee members on the selection committee. The revised 2019/20 outreach campaign helped ensure that potential applicants across communities were aware of the program, had clear directions, and were given the opportunity to ask questions. It further engaged a much larger pool of partners to reach a broader group of businesses (for details, see Case Study 2 and Figure 13). Key to the outreach campaign were a series of seven information sessions held across WSU communities in English and Spanish with the help of WSU’s partners. Information session partners included:

➢ Co-sponsors served as neighborhood representatives, co-hosted information sessions, publicized SBG, and facilitated communication between the communities and WSU.
➢ Outreach partners helped to distribute information about SBG through their networks.
➢ Technical assistance providers, including small business development centers and community organizations, provided services like application assistance to small businesses.

The information sessions were an especially useful way for potential applicants to connect with technical assistance providers, who described their services and offered guidance to businesses in attendance. WSU also posted videos of the information sessions online so that those who were unable to attend could hear answers to frequently asked questions.
Between September and October 2019, 463 businesses applied for a grant (299 established, 164 start-up), with the majority of applicants representing Other Services (85), Retail Trade (63), Arts and Entertainment (62), Accomodation and Food (55), and Educational Services (48) industries. WSU used a multi-tiered grantee selection process to ensure feedback was incorporated from multiple stakeholders. Accion initially scored applicants and identified a short list of businesses for more detailed review using a quantitative rubric based on items such as revenue and profit in the past year. Accion presented the short list to the SBG selection committee, which included WSU staff, CAC representatives, funders, and partner hospital representatives. The committee evaluated the applications in detail, considering factors such as the potential return on investment, the sufficiency of requested funds to produce the applicant’s stated outcomes, and the probability that the business would contribute to economic vitality on the West Side. The multi-tiered process ensured that a variety of criteria and reviewers contributed to grantee selection and that community residents were able to provide input. The selection committee shared their recommendations with the funders, who ultimately selected 29 grantees (Appendix 5), dispersing a total of $497,000. The 29 grantees were comprised of 10 established businesses and 19 start-ups. The industries represented by the 29 grantees include Accommodation and Food Services (10), Other Services (4), Construction (4), Arts and Entertainment (3), Educational Services (2), and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (2), among others (Appendix 5). Additional details on applicants and grantees can be found in Figure 15.
WSU held a public event to announce the grantees in January 2020. At the event, WSU staff, funders, and grantees from the 2018/19 pilot shared their stories of the SBG. The event was well attended and covered by local media. Since January 2020, grantee business owners have started using their funds to expand their small businesses (see Small Business Spotlight for more details). They will provide their first progress report to WSU in July 2020.

**Case Study 2: Using Data to Improve Outreach and Recruitment (SBG RQ5)**

As with the EPP, WSU uses a rapid assessment approach in the SBG to understand successful program elements and identify elements that fail to meet program aims. After piloting the SBG program in 2018/19, WSU recognized the need for wider distribution of funds across its ten target communities. To determine the best approach for increasing the applicant pool, WSU examined its 2018/19 activities. In doing so, WSU acknowledged that its primary focus for the first pilot year was establishing a proof of concept, planning and implementing SBG for the first time and providing $85,000 to local for-profit and nonprofit small businesses. The group did not have substantial resources to support administrative activities, such as outreach and application support. In fact, in 2018, WSU was only able to hold two information sessions in East Garfield Park and Pilsen, resulting in a total of 106 grant applications (25% non-profit and 75% for-profit businesses) and seven grantees.

While the 2018/19 activities served as a successful proof of concept, the team wanted to increase the geographic diversity of the applicant pool in the subsequent year. To do this, the team pursued funding that could be dedicated to outreach activities. With additional resources, the team revised and expanded its strategic outreach approach with the aim of a more geographically diverse applicant pool in 2019/20. To meet this aim, the team engaged CAC members and other local partners with connections to business owners in West Side neighborhoods to distribute marketing materials and publicize information sessions (Figure 13). Partners publicized information sessions to their networks through word of mouth, website postings, newsletters, and social media. Technical assistance partners presented at the information sessions and provided help to business owners in completing their applications. Information sessions were offered in English and Spanish and covered frequently asked questions about the application process and grant. The sessions were also recorded and posted online for business owners that were unable to attend to access.

The improvements showed immediate results. By the time the 2019/20 grant application closed, 335 people attended seven information sessions, and 463 businesses applied to the SBG – four times as many as in 2018/19 (Figure 14). Two thirds of business owner applicants were people of color, low to moderate income, or women. This dramatic increase demonstrated the importance of developing a focused outreach strategy and engaging the right partners to recruit a large, diverse, applicant pool. Looking forward, WSU aims to improve its outreach to Spanish-speaking business owners as only 16 of the 463 applications were submitted in Spanish.

**Figure 14. Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG) 2019/20 Information Sessions**

- **7** Information sessions completed
- **23** Partners publicized program
- **335** People attended information sessions
Measuring Progress – Systems Changes (RQ3 and RQ4)

As part of the SBG, WSU pursues systems changes that improve economic opportunity for small business owners and residents on Chicago’s West Side. Table 4 outlines internal and external systems issues that WSU addresses as part of the SBG, planned action steps for each, and progress thus far. Internal systems changes include “behind the scenes” improvements to how the organizations or people operating a system function and external changes include improvements in how services are provided by a system. WSU will continue to track progress across these systems changes throughout SBG. Evaluators will also use results to answer Research Questions 3 and 4 (RQ3, RQ4; see Table 1 for detailed questions).

Overall, WSU implements internal and external systems changes with the aims of:

- Initiating grants for small businesses from the healthcare sector without repayment so that small businesses can gain equity to access additional funds through traditional lending mechanisms.
- Creating active partnerships with institutions, such as Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and others, to provide TA and coaching to small businesses.
- Raising WSU hospital awareness of local small businesses available to meet purchasing needs.
- Engaging community members in the selection of grantees and grant monitoring process.
- Increasing small business revenue, profits, and jobs for local residents.
### Table 4. West Side United (WSU) Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool Program (SBG) Internal and External Systems Issues and Year 1 Progress, (April 2019 – March 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Actions</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Progress in Grant Year 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems Changes</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Issue:</strong> For-profit businesses, including start-ups, have limited access to capital in the form of grants that do not need to be paid back or matched.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Financial institutions, Partner hospitals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Change:</strong> Initiate small business grants (SBGs) from the healthcare sector to for-profit businesses without requiring repayment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase access to equity through small grants for all small businesses (SBs), not just nonprofits, by providing grants to for-profit SBs.</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>The 2019/20 funding cycle targeted both start-ups and established for-profit businesses. For 2020, 19 start-ups ($247,000 total grant funds) and 10 established businesses ($250,000 total grant funds) were funded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of WSU partner hospitals and other funders supporting the SBG pool.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Three WSU partner hospitals, alongside Northern Trust, support the SBG pool, and representatives also serve on the SBG selection committee.</td>
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<td><strong>Systems Issue:</strong> Current grant-giving mechanisms do not provide a wide range of support services or access to technical assistance for SB owners.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Financial institutions, Hospitals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Change:</strong> Create active partnerships to provide TA/coaching with Chambers of Commerce, SB Development Centers, Chicago Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, and other nonprofit partners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase partnerships with local partners to provide technical assistance and coaching to SBs.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>For the 2020 grant cycle, WSU partnered with ten organizations to provide technical assistance to applicants and funded business owners.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Issue:</strong> While partner hospitals are located on the West Side, they do not always prioritize or consider prioritizing local SBs for purchasing needs, reallocating funds to communities other than the ones they intend to serve.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Hospitals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Change:</strong> Raise partner hospital awareness of local SBs available to meet their purchasing needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase partner hospital awareness of local SBs available to meet their purchasing needs.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Currently, partner hospitals aware of funded SBs include the three hospitals supporting SBG. These hospitals, along with the three other partner hospitals from WSU’s Local Procurement Work Group, received the list of SBGP awardees. In response to this knowledge, one hospital added the SBs to their approved vendor listing so that the hospital could easily work with these vendors. In the future, WSU aims to encourage other partner hospitals to make similar adjustments.</td>
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<td><strong>Systems Issue:</strong> Community residents often do not have a say in the businesses that are funded or that flourish in their neighborhoods.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target System(s):</strong> Financial institutions</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Change:</strong> Engage community members in selection and monitoring processes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage local residents from WSU communities in the evaluation of SBG applications and oversight of</td>
<td>Complete and continuing</td>
<td>WSU has a strong Community Advisory Committee (CAC) with representatives from across West Side Communities. The CAC oversees WSU activities and members serve on the WSU Leadership Council, as well as all initiative Working Groups. Five CAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Actions</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Progress in Grant Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>funded SBs and engage local community organizations to publicize the program.</td>
<td></td>
<td>members with backgrounds in SBs and familiarity with the community economic environment serve on the SBG Selection Committee. In addition, for the 2019/20 grant cycle, 23 local organizations served as co-sponsors and/or outreach partners.</td>
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</table>

**External Systems Changes**

**Systems Issue:** SB owners are often unaware of the various support mechanisms that can assist them in starting and building a successful small business.

**Target System(s):** Financial institutions, Local organizations, Government partners

**Systems Change:** Raise SB owner awareness of technical support and ease access (pre-grant, during grant, and post-grant).

| Raise SB owner awareness of technical support and ease access to coaching and support for SBs. | In progress | WSU has provided financial coaching and technical assistance resources to funded SBs through its partnerships. Funded businesses received a list of technical assistance partners when they received grant funds. WSU has also reached out to the businesses and provided referrals to resources during the COVID-19 crisis. |

**Systems Issue:** Partner hospital supply chains have the potential to support the local economy by prioritizing procurement from local businesses; however, hospital policies are not designed with this aim

**Target System(s):** Partner hospitals

**Systems Change:** Increase hospital procurement from local businesses, demonstrating the financial value to the hospital as well as the local economy.

| One partner hospital modified its payment processes for local businesses to require payment within 7 days for services (versus 45 days) to accommodate the realities of SB owners. | Complete and continuing | One partner hospital updated their policy; however, it is the type of policy that could be integrated into other partner hospitals as well. |
| Increase the level of business integration with partner hospital local procurement initiatives. | In progress | Beyond the AdvancingCities initiatives, WSU is working with partner hospitals and Chicago Anchors for a Strong Economy (CASE) (a local organization focused on connecting Chicago anchor institutions to local vendors) to create a repository of vendors used by WSU’s partner hospitals. As part of this work, highly recommended vendors are selected to be placed on CASE’s broader vendor list intended for all its local institutional partners. WSU plans to incorporate the SBG pool of businesses into this procurement effort. In addition, WSU plans to work with partner hospitals to explore the possibility of synergizing the SBG program and the WSU’s local procurement initiative by using a portion of grant funds specifically to support SBs that have an interest in being hospital vendors. This initiative is on hold due to COVID-19. |
| Connect SB owners with partner hospital supply chains (e.g., caterer on West Side), increasing orders from or contracts with small businesses. | Not started | WSU will not start measuring the extent to which SBs receive contracts from partner hospitals until July 2020. |
Small Business Spotlight: Chef’s on the Go’Go, a Small Business Success

Chef’s on the Go’Go is a Chicago-based boutique catering and pop-up company based out of The Hatchery in East Garfield Park. Owner Polly Coleman has long been passionate about sharing her love of food with the community – first through volunteering and later as a professional. In 2019, she established her own company, Chef’s on the Go-Go, using her personal savings. When Coleman started her business, she applied for traditional financing, but was only able to get a small start-up loan because of her lack of credit. Polly’s contacts at Accion, where she applied for the loan, encouraged her to apply for the SBG program. After deciding to apply, Accion helped her complete the application process.

Since receiving the SBG funding, Polly purchased a truck to help her run her catering business. Before purchasing the truck, Polly used Uber for transportation, spending over $400 on fees in the first four months of her business operations. Polly also used the grant funds to: purchase kitchen equipment, including a fryer and blender; pay for equipment storage; rent a kitchen at the Hatchery, where she bases her business; and cover payroll. Aside from the financial help, being part of the grantees network has brought her new business. After WSU recommended Chef’s On The Go’Go to the American Medical Association, they were hired to cater a reception attended by the Mayor of Chicago.

Polly says she’s thankful to be part of the SBG program and for the support she’s received. She remains devoted to her goal of providing clients with customized, professional services. She is also committed to supporting others by hiring employees that may be looking for a second chance, such as people in recovery or who have experienced homelessness. Polly was forced to close Chef’s On The Go’Go temporarily in Spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but she continues to serve her community by volunteering and is currently using her new equipment to help prepare food for workers at Chicago hospitals.

Measuring Progress - Looking Forward

As SBG continues, evaluators will leverage various data sources to answer the research questions outlined in Table 1. Each awarded small business is expected to complete: a mid-year report (first in July 2020) that includes information on business revenue, progress towards the owner’s self-defined goals, and workforce development, including full- and part-time positions; a year-end report that includes the same information as well as net income and payroll information (first in January 2021); and, follow-up reports every six months thereafter to track continued business progress. In addition, evaluators will survey business owners to discern additional outcomes related to business owner wellbeing and satisfaction. Business owners, stakeholders, and funders will also be invited to participate in interviews about their experiences with SBG. The survey and interview tools are currently under review by the Rush University Medical Center Institutional Review Board. These evaluation activities will also assess progress towards systems changes (RQ3 and RQ4).
Successes, Challenges, and Solutions

Successes
From April 2019 through March 2020, WSU successfully expanded the SBG program using AdvancingCities funding. WSU, along with its outreach partners, dramatically increased the reach of the information sessions from 2018/19, attracting 463 businesses to apply for grants. The selection process engaged members of the CAC and the expertise of WSU program partner Accion. A total of 29 businesses received grants totaling $497,000. WSU also began to address systems issues that prevent West Side small businesses from thriving.

Challenges and Solutions
The WSU team also faced various challenges in implementing the SBG program over the past year. The following outlines the most significant challenges and explains how WSU leveraged its partnerships, community insights, and data-driven rapid assessment approach to pursue innovative solutions.

- Linking small businesses with hospital procurement strategies
  As part of WSU’s Economic Vitality strategies, partner hospitals committed to increasing procurement from West Side businesses and revising protocols to be more amenable to local small businesses. While one hospital has already revised its contracting process to require payment to small businesses within seven days (versus 45 days), all hospitals have different protocols and procedures. Revising procurement strategies across hospitals will take time and tailored approaches. In addition, WSU has only recently started linking the SBG program to its larger West Side procurement initiatives. In the next year, the team will likely have additional insights on the challenges and successes of this work.
  
  One approach that may improve WSU’s alignment of the SBG program with procurement initiatives is to prioritize applicants offering services that partner hospitals and hospital employees value. While many small businesses add vitality to communities, WSU will have the most impact if it creates longer-term relationships with grantees through its procurement initiatives and advertisement to employees.

- Community and business questions when small businesses not funded
  After grantees were selected and announced, WSU staff who attended unrelated community events were often faced with concerns from unfunded business owners and/or organizational representatives who helped recruit business applicants. Many community members had questions on why businesses were or were not selected, and many were dissatisfied with WSU’s communication about final decisions. Oftentimes, individuals did not understand the volume of applications that WSU received or the competitive nature of the process. The WSU team is considering this feedback and revisiting its post-award communication strategy for 2020.

- Community representation
  Unfortunately, one of WSU’s 10 community areas had no businesses funded for 2020. To guarantee equitable distribution of grants across WSU’s 10 target communities, WSU is considering alternative approaches to reviewing applications in 2020/21. For example, WSU may organize applicants by location and then review applications within in each of the communities against each other. Even though this may prevent competitive applications from being funded (if they are from a community with a large
volume of quality applications), the approach will help WSU confirm that it has grantees across all 10 target communities.

Lessons Learned and Insights

The first two years of SBG (AdvancingCities did not fund the first year) provided several lessons learned that can inform other AdvancingCities grantees or institutions pursuing small business grant programs.

Lesson One: Fund For-Profit Businesses

For-profit businesses, including start-ups, have limited access to small business grants that do not need to be paid back or matched. The larger-than-anticipated volume of businesses that applied (164 start-ups and 299 established businesses) led to a newfound recognition among WSU staff, stakeholders, and funders of the need for this type of funding on the West Side. In 2018, WSU received 106 applications; however, in 2019, after improving upon the outreach campaign, WSU received 463 applications. The outpouring of responses demonstrates the critical demand for a larger pool of funds to meet the needs of West Side small businesses. While WSU has successfully enhanced its funding pool in the past year through AdvancingCities and others, it must continue to expand to adequately address community needs. This requires that WSU pursue existing and new investment leads while continuing to demonstrate program impact.

Lesson Two: Consider Needs of Spanish-speaking Small Business Owners

To ensure that Spanish-speaking business owners have equitable access to SBG, particularly in communities with large Spanish-speaking populations, it is important to consider this group’s needs. While WSU made Spanish applications available, it did not complete all outreach and marketing in English and Spanish. This may have contributed to some challenges in receiving applications from target communities with a larger share of Spanish-speaking business owners. Looking forward, WSU plans to have all materials in English and Spanish prepared on the first day of its outreach campaign. Further, all finalist applications will be fully translated for the selection committee, so the applications are reviewed as though they were submitted in English by evaluators who are not bilingual.

Lesson Three: Flexibility is Critical to Success

In its overarching approach to programming, WSU uses real-time data to conduct rapid assessment and quality improvement. As part of SBG, WSU and Accion review the application, selection, and communication processes annually – assessing successes and areas in need of improvement. A detailed example of the team’s use of data and information to improve program processes is outlined in Case Study 2. While beneficial to the program and stakeholders, this approach requires ongoing reflection and flexibility among staff and funders to change program elements over time.

WSU and Accion already identified several areas for potential revision in 2020: (a) the maximum funding amounts of $15,000 (start-ups) and $30,000 (established businesses); (b) removing a requirement that businesses align to community Quality of Life Plans – WSU did this in an attempt to promote the plans, but in practice, the requirement confused applicants; (c) reconsideration of the quantitative criteria used to identify finalists to include items other than profit and revenue that ensure WSU funds a variety of businesses; and, (d) application process improvements to better meet grantee, funder, and WSU needs, such as enhancements to the electronic forms and revisions to the Spanish outreach campaign.
The team’s flexibility in reviewing and revising existing processes allows SBG to rapidly improve over time, but also requires flexibility from funders, such as that afforded by JPMC through AdvancingCities.

Lesson Four: Assessing Business Success and Long-term Growth

The SBG team plans to use business outcomes data to understand factors other than revenue and profit that make a business successful. This will aid reviewers in their assessment of future applicants and help the group understand what businesses fit best into WSU hospital procurement strategies. WSU plans to work with partner hospitals to explore the possibility of synergizing the SBG program and the WSU’s local procurement initiative by using a portion of grant funds to support SBs that have a specific interest in being hospital vendors. An example of the potential value that connecting businesses to new contracting opportunities is highlighted in the Small Business Spotlight. Further, WSU plans to use outcomes data to understand the myriad ways that businesses use funds to grow and mature. For example, some businesses may increase revenue to hire more employees, whereas others may adopt new technologies that do not result in more jobs but increase revenue. Understanding the different uses of funds and types of success will assist WSU and funders in allocating future funds and will allow WSU to support businesses beyond the funding period.

Lesson Five: Don’t Forget Post-Selection Follow-up

While WSU has been intentional in its promotion and review of SBG applications, additional follow-up is warranted to increase the program’s effectiveness. WSU is considering two strategies:

Improving follow-up: Accion and WSU are working to improve their coordination to more quickly follow-up with unfunded businesses and offer free business coaching services. Despite the volume of applications, only 52 of the 463 businesses that applied in 2019 sought business coaching services. Developing business plans: WSU is considering an added requirement that grant winners develop a business plan with Accion as a condition of receiving the grant. This will help maximize future business success and ensure that grantees continue to succeed in ways that WSU can celebrate over the long-term.
Chicago AdvancingCities Key Takeaways

WSU is expanding the Employee Professional Pathways program (EPP) and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG) through support from JPMorgan Chase’s AdvancingCities initiative. WSU’s successes, challenges, and resulting lessons in this first year of funding are a valuable source of insights for WSU and others administering similar programs.

Importance of collaboration and partnership. The successful expansion of EPP and SBG would not have been feasible without the collaboration between WSU’s six partner hospitals and the contributions of WSU’s multi-sector industry and community partners. The collaboration between partner hospitals enabled the group to achieve much more than any one hospital could on their own. WSU additionally benefits from the support of local and national funders that provide flexible funding, which allows WSU to tailor programs to participant needs.

The EPP is successful due to strong partnerships that allow WSU to provide a coordinated and multi-faceted program to partner hospital employees. EPP is only possible through WSU’s unique collaboration of six partner hospitals. Each hospital would have needed to build considerable infrastructure to support EPP individually; however, by combining resources, they were able to pursue the more efficient joint programs. WSU works with hospital representatives, partners with expertise in education, training, and workforce development, community organizations, and funders to administer the program. The broad engagement of topic-matter expertise in areas like workforce development and education and training allows WSU to provide both skills-based training as well as wraparound supports that increase success in and outside of the classroom. In particular, this past year, WSU expanded its partnership with One Million Degrees and Skills for Chicagoland’s Future to better serve participants by streamlining career pathways management through one centralized institution (OMD for MAPP and Skills for CNA) and providing wraparound supports, such as case management and professional development.

WSU also employs a collaborative approach to plan and implement the SBG program, engaging partners with a variety of expertise beyond that of its partner hospitals. In 2019, WSU expanded its partnerships by connecting with small business development centers and community-based organizations (CBOs) on the West Side. These new partners helped WSU promote SBG and provide application support to businesses, resulting in a significant increase in applications from the previous year. In addition, WSU’s technical assistance partners offer valuable business development services to small businesses, such as application assistance and business coaching. SBG also complements WSU’s local procurement initiative, which aims to source partner hospital supply chains locally, by providing grants to small businesses that can contract with partner hospitals to meet their various needs. WSU partner hospitals are in a unique position to build upon SBG program impact by contracting funded businesses as vendors.

Regardless of initiative size, collaboration is key to success, and for smaller programs, may be necessary to scale-up effective projects. Hospitals, regardless of their size, are in a unique position to build
economic impact by contracting local businesses as vendors. Any sized workforce development program or business grant program will benefit from partnering with local experts in education, training, and business development.

**Centricity of community.** WSU views West Side community members and organizations as experts on neighborhood needs and wellbeing. Therefore, WSU sought input from their community partners throughout the first year of AdvancingCities funding. Community residents from the WSU Community Advisory Council (CAC) serve on the WSU Steering Committee and provide general direction and oversight to WSU. CAC members also serve on WSU working groups that plan, implement, and oversee EPP and SBG. Community member feedback throughout all levels of WSU ensures that initiatives are grounded in community needs and expand upon existing community assets. CAC member input was of particular importance to SBG over the last year. CAC members helped publicize SBG information sessions through their networks, reaching business owners from more West Side communities. CAC members also played a key role in selecting funded small businesses. The SBG selection committee included five community members with experience owning and/or serving West Side small businesses.

Once again, regardless of initiative size, engaging community voice in programmatic decisions will increase success and buy-in from end-users. To incorporate community voice, smaller initiatives do not necessarily need an 18-person CAC; teams can identify feasible and sustainable ways to engage community members and leaders that best meet their individual program needs.

**Value of rapid improvement approaches.** Activities over the past year demonstrate the value of WSU’s rapid assessment approach in program improvement. The WSU evaluation framework places an emphasis on continuously monitoring data to assess the effectiveness of programming. As a result, WSU can use real-time data to identify areas that need improvement and respond with targeted program changes. Over the last year, areas for improvement were identified in EPP and SBG, and WSU quickly focused on these areas for improvement and implemented changes. Applicants for the Medical Assistant Pathway Program (MAPP) were struggling to meet the placement exam requirements. In response, the WSU team designed and implemented a Readiness Program that accepted 21 participants in early 2020, over a year earlier than originally planned (Case Study 1). For SBG, WSU used data from the pilot phase in 2018/19 to identify areas for improvement, namely in publicizing the program and conducting outreach. After connecting with more partners to publicize the SBG and holding a larger number of information sessions than in 2018, WSU received over 300 more applications than the year prior, far exceeding their goal of 150 applications (Case Study 2). Initiatives do not need sophisticated data collection processes in order to use information to inform programming. Simply identifying some key process measures to monitor in the early stages of implementation will help teams quickly identify areas for improvement.
Conclusion

During the first year of AdvancingCities funding, WSU expanded its Employee Professional Pathways (EPP) and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG) programs. WSU established the programs to align with its mission of decreasing the life expectancy gap between Chicago’s West Side and the Loop by increasing economic stability and opportunity for residents. The first year of evaluation focused on assessing the implementation and progress of these initiatives. The evaluation team documented significant progress in WSU’s administration of the programs, its ability to address systems issues, and its active response to implementation challenges thus far.

AdvancingCities Year 2

In Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting all WSU programming, including EPP and SBG. Looking forward, the pandemic will likely have a dramatic impact on the progress of EPP applicants and participants as well as small business grantees. WSU has already begun modifying its programming to respond to emerging participant and business needs. For example, in Spring 2020, WSU, JPMC, and Accion awarded $10,000 micro emergency grants to 11 funded SBG businesses to offset losses due to reduced employee hours and income. The evaluators will continue to track the effects of COVID-19 on WSU initiatives throughout Year 2.

During the second year of AdvancingCities funding, WSU plans to continue to develop and improve EPP and SBG while being mindful of lessons learned and key takeaways from this first year. To further answer project research questions (see Table 1), in the second year, WSU and evaluators will collect and analyze individual-level data from EPP applicants and participants, as well as business-level data from SBG applicants and grantees to identify which characteristics, services, and supports relate to a participant’s or grantee’s success. In particular, EPP participants and SBG grantees will complete surveys about their experiences and growth within the programs. Evaluators will begin administering surveys and conducting interviews with participants, grantees, and program stakeholders (e.g., program team members, hospital stakeholders, community partners) to gather more nuanced information on program satisfaction and the paths by which these two programs lead to greater economic vitality on the West Side.
Appendices

Appendix 1. References

Appendix 2. West Side United’s Assessment Framework and Community-Level Indicators

In 2019, WSU developed a three-tiered assessment framework in response to the need for a comprehensive infrastructure that connected WSU’s initiatives and programs, including EPP and SBG, with its overarching goal to reduce the life expectancy gap. The framework aims to understand the collective impact of WSU by measuring progress across three “tiers” that span from the community- to the impact area- to the initiative-level (Figure I). Tiers I and II include community- and impact area-level indicators measured at the population-level (e.g., life expectancy in North Lawndale or infant mortality in East Garfield Park) (Figure II). Tier I and II indicators were selected to assess progress over time in life expectancy, health outcomes, and impact area-specific outcomes (e.g., unemployment). Tier III includes initiative-level indicators and evaluation. Measuring at these three levels allows WSU to understand how individual programs (Tier III) may influence population-level health (Tiers I and II) over time.

Figure I. West Side United’s (WSU) Tiered Assessment Framework

Tier I. WSU Overarching Goal (Community-Level Health, Mortality, and Life Expectancy Metrics)

Reduce the life expectancy gap and improve health

Tier II. WSU Domains of Impact (Domain-Related, Community-Level Metrics)

Education  |  Economic Vitality  |  Neighborhood & Physical Environment  |  Health and Healthcare

Tier III. WSU Initiatives (Initiative-Level Metrics)

- Health Careers Pipelines
- Small Business Grants
- Food Insecurity Screens
- Fruit/Veg Voucher Program
- Co-Locating Services
- Local Hiring & Spend
- Career Pathways
- Food Pantry Support
- Nutrition Education
- Impact Investing
- CHW Initiatives

AdvancingCities Chicago Year 1
Reporting period: April 2019 – March 2020
Figure II. West Side United’s (WSU) Community and Impact Area-Level Metrics

Tier I. WSU Overarching Goal (Community-Level Health, Mortality, and Life Expectancy Metrics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Life Expectancy and Mortality Drivers of the Life Expectancy Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiometabolic Disease (CM):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronary heart disease deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke deaths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular disease-related hospitalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes hospitalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide (H):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun-related homicides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-related hospitalizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tier II. WSU Domains of Impact (Domain-Related, Community-Level Metrics)

**Education**
- Targeted Outcomes: ALL
  - Adult educational attainment
  - Disconnected youth
  - High school graduation
  - 8th Grade math proficiency rate
  - 3rd Grade reading proficiency rate
  - Kindergarten readiness

**Economic Vitality**
- Targeted Outcomes: ALL
  - Individual poverty (% below FPL)
  - Child poverty (% <18yo below FPL)
  - Median income
  - Living wage
  - Unemployment (civilian, 16yo+)

**Neighborhood & Physical Environment**
- Targeted Outcomes:
  - **Food Environment:**
    - Food insecurity
    - Perceptions of healthy and affordable food access
  - **Housing:**
    - Housing cost burden
    - Vacancy rate
  - **Safety and Community:**
    - Perceptions of safety
    - Sense of community belonging
  - Non-fatal shooting rate
  - Violent crime
  - Narcotics/vice crime

**Health and Healthcare**
- Targeted Outcomes:
  - **Health Outcomes:**
    - Obesity prevalence
    - Psychological distress
    - Behavioral health hosp.
    - Asthma ED visits (0 to 18 yo)
    - Self-rated health
  - **Behaviors:**
    - Fruit & vegetable eating
    - Smoking
    - Physical Activity
    - Teen birth rate
  - **Health Service Use:**
    - Healthcare satisfaction
    - Received needed care
    - Early & adequate prenatal care
    - Mammogram
    - Cervical cancer screen
    - Colorectal cancer screen
### Appendix 3. Data and Sources Used for AdvancingCities Evaluation

#### Table I. Evaluation Data for Employee Professional Pathway (EPP) and Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG) Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Employee Professional Pathways</th>
<th>Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Records</td>
<td>• Records on additional funding, community partners, and outreach efforts</td>
<td>• Records on additional funding, community partners, and outreach efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Application information</td>
<td>• Application information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participant use of support services</td>
<td>• Applicant and grantee use of support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation information (# of applicants, enrollees, graduates, licensees)</td>
<td>• Participation information (# of applicants, eligible, funded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Records tracking program costs</td>
<td>• Records on grant funds received/dispersed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Records tracking administrative costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institution</td>
<td>• Placement testing information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records</td>
<td>• Records related to graduation and attaining credentials, licensures, or certifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant/Grantee Surveys</td>
<td>• Satisfaction with program</td>
<td>• Business outcomes (revenue, income, jobs etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing challenges</td>
<td>• How funds were used, progress towards business goals, technological growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other improved outcomes (wellbeing, self-efficacy etc.)</td>
<td>• Satisfaction with program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Interviews</td>
<td>• Participant experiences in program,</td>
<td>• Business challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing challenges</td>
<td>• Other improved outcomes (wellbeing, self-efficacy etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved outcomes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer Data</td>
<td>• Participant employment, position, pay, and retention</td>
<td>• Participant experiences in program,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Information on unique way SBG addressed their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Interviews</td>
<td>• Program benefits and challenges</td>
<td>• Program benefits and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Costs</td>
<td>• Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Satisfaction</td>
<td>• Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing needs</td>
<td>• Ongoing needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Internal systems change framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Management Team</td>
<td>• Qualitative information on project protocols, program expansion, program improvements, and policy and systems changes</td>
<td>• Qualitative information on project protocols, program expansion, program improvements, and systems changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualitative information on working with employers, recruitment efforts, and career pathway development</td>
<td>• Qualitative information on community engagement and program status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4. What is LoIn?

What is LoIn?

Goodman and colleagues created a framework that describes the dimensions that compromise the levels of institutionalization (LoIn). The LoIn framework describes how institutionalization can be achieved in four main subsystems within an organization and the degree of integration of a program within each of the subsystems.\(^6\)\(^,\)\(^7\)

According to Goodman, organizations are generally comprised of four subsystems. The **production subsystem** is concerned with activities that are product directed (e.g., implementation of procedures, schedules, and program evaluation). The **maintenance subsystem** is personnel directed and is concerned with recruitment, retention, rewarding and sanction. The **supportive subsystem** is concerned with funding and other supportive infrastructure (e.g., program space). The **managerial subsystem** coordinates and directs the other subsystem’s operations, making sure all subsystems are working well within the organization.\(^6\)

Although institutionalization may be characterized by the extent of a program’s integration into the subsystems, subsystem integration by itself is insufficient for determining the LoIn.\(^6\)\(^,\)\(^7\) Program institutionalization also occurs to different degrees, ranging from shallow to deep.\(^6\)\(^,\)\(^7\) For instance, the degree of institutionalization increases when a formalized program plan is regularly implemented in the organization (i.e., production subsystem), or when program staff that are grant funded become permanent employees in the organization (i.e., maintenance subsystem).

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**Figure III. Organizational subsystems for Employee Professional Pathways, the example of Medical Assistant Pathway Program**

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**Figure IV. Model for the diffusion of innovations within organizations**

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*Advancing Cities Chicago Year 1*

*Reporting period: April 2019 – March 2020*
Drawing from the LoIn framework, Goodman, McLeroy and colleagues created the *LoIn instrument*. This instrument comprises 15 questions that aim to measure the extent of program integration into an organization.\(^\text{10}\)

**Why is institutionalization important?**

The Employee Professional Pathways program provides opportunities to entry-level and incumbent low-wage healthcare workers across hospitals by providing career pathways and remedial education that leads to positions of greater financial security and pay. Educational programs like the one described here, may not become sustainable over time, despite how theoretically sound, well implemented, and effective they may prove to be. For a program to become sustainable, it must achieve some degree of institutionalization. Institutionalization is defined as the final stage of an innovation diffusion process (Figure IV), where a program achieves longevity.\(^\text{7}\) Once a program is institutionalized within an organization, it will live for a long and productive period.
Appendix 5. Businesses Funded by West Side United’s Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool, 2019/20

- Established Businesses
  - 6978 Soul Food
  - Amazing Edibles
  - Back of the Yards Coffee LLC Pilsen Coffeehouse
  - Coleman’s Bar-B-Que No. 2
  - DLV Printing Service, Inc.
  - It Takes A Village
  - Metaphrasis Language & Cultural Solutions, LLC
  - Salsedo Press Inc.
  - Thomas Mechanical Corporation
  - Twenty Eleven Construction Inc.

- Start-up Businesses
  - A Taste of Nostalgia
  - AD HOC PROPERTY SERVICES, LLC
  - All the Details Cleaning
  - BLK Building Solutions LLC
  - Chef’s on the Go’Go LLC
  - DermaPhilia
  - FIT CITY
  - La Chilangueada
  - LiveEquipd LLC
  - Madison Ethos, Inc.
  - McCanna Videography
  - Rose and Jaad Construction Inc.
  - Smooth and Social Roots
  - Strickland Brothers BBQ & Jerk
  - Terra Bites
  - The Corner Store Deli
  - The Lighthouse Cafe LLC
  - US Veterans Security, LLC
  - Worthy One Designs
Figure VI. West Side United (WSU) Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool (SBG) Grantees 2019/20

1. Thomas Mechanical Corporation
2. 6978 Soul Food
3. La Chilango Lendarte
4. It Takes a Village
5. McCanna Videography
6. The Corner Stone Cafe
7. Coleman's Bar-B-Que No 2
8. BLK Building Solutions, LLC
9. All The Details Cleaning
10. Salseros Press Inc
11. Metaphysical Language & Culture
12. DLV Printing Service, Inc
13. Stickland Brothers BBQ & Jerk
14. DermaPhila
15. Chef's on the Go/Go LLC
16. Smooth and Social Roots
17. Twenty Eleven Construction Inc
18. Madison Ethics, Inc
19. US Veterans Security, LLC
20. Terra Bites
21. The Lighthouse Cafe LLC
22. A Taste of Nostalgia
23. A.D. HOC Property Services, LLC
24. Worthy One Designs
25. Amazing Edibles
26. Rose and Jad Construction Inc
27. FIT CITY
28. Back of the Yards Coffeehouse
29. LiveEquipped (will serve multiple west side locations)
# Appendix 6. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accion</td>
<td>A Small Business Accelerator Grant Program technical assistance partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADN</td>
<td>Associate in Applied Science Degree in Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALEKS Math</td>
<td>Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces, City Colleges of Chicago math placement exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMITA</td>
<td>AMITA Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNA</td>
<td>Basic Nursing Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSN</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science in Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Community Advisory Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Community-Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>Civic Consulting Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCWP</td>
<td>Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNA Pathway</td>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant Pathway Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook County</td>
<td>Cook County Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWFA</td>
<td>Chicago Workforce Funders Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUA</td>
<td>Data Use Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Reading-to-Write</td>
<td>City Colleges of Chicago English placement exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>Employee Professional Pathways</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health IT Pathway</td>
<td>Health Information Technology Pathway Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPMC</td>
<td>JPMorgan Chase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level UP</td>
<td>Level UP program, college prep course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lolin</td>
<td>Level of Institutionalization Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lurie</td>
<td>Ann &amp; Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPP</td>
<td>Medical Assistant Pathway Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>MXC</td>
<td>Malcolm X College; City Colleges of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Able</td>
<td>National Able Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Pathway</td>
<td>Nursing Pathway Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMD</td>
<td>One Million Degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCT</td>
<td>Patient Care Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rush</td>
<td>Rush University Medical Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Small Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBG</td>
<td>Small Business Accelerator Grant Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sinai</td>
<td>Sinai Health System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Skills for Chicagoland’s Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUHI</td>
<td>Sinai Urban Health Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Chicago 2025</td>
<td>Chicago Department of Public Health’s 2025 Community Health Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UI Health</td>
<td>University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSU</td>
<td>West Side United</td>
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</tbody>
</table>