



# CJC At Work

*September 29, 2023*



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September is Workforce Development Month and it's a time to salute all of our CJC members and partners in the workforce ecosystem.

This is also an ideal time to lift up the work that remains around narratives related to the field of workforce development. Narratives are stories, both written and spoken. Narratives are how we talk about our work and

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what we think about the people who access and utilize workforce development programs. Narratives can be formed and shaped based on the opinions and biases we hold.

**One current narrative is that people don't want to work.** This statement opens up a wide range of views about the labor shortage that exists. But I don't think it's that simple. **We can't ignore the benefits cliff and the complex decision making** that is required to calculate whether or not a job is worth it for an individual and their family. Some people might respond, "well, any job is better than no job." But is it really?

In a recent job growth report, **the highest job growth was in low-wage jobs**, followed by high-wage jobs, and finally middle-wage jobs. If we consider that low-wage jobs are on the rise, and then factor in inflation, transportation needs and cost, the rising cost of childcare, and the ability to meet a family's basic needs, we can begin to gain a deeper understanding of what is contributing to the labor shortage.

When we keep job seekers at the center of everything we do, recognizing them as whole, creative, and resourceful people who offer the workplace a unique set of skills they already possess, we can begin to change these harmful narratives.

As we think about the contributions being made in the labor market, we want to ensure that all employees are able to thrive. **If we genuinely want to see equitable outcomes in the workforce, we have to acknowledge the different needs that must be met.**

The data shows increased program completion and high rates of success when individuals receive wrap-around supportive services – inclusive of unconditional cash assistance for a specific period of time – based on their unique circumstances. The evidence is clear: **designated funding to eliminate barriers can contribute to an individual's success in workforce programs.**

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As we continue to think about WIOA Re-Authorization and further advocate for more workforce investments that contribute to human capital while being equity minded to change occupational segregation, let's make narrative change a priority for the field.

In honor of Workforce Development Month, **let's be mindful of how we talk about our work and how we talk about the people we serve, and let's be bold enough to BE the change we want to see!**

*Lisa M. Bly-Jones*

**Welcome to CJC!**

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**Valerie Charles** is CJC's new Director of Capacity Building & Training. She will lead the capacity building team and manage day-to-day operations and execution of short-term and multi-year initiatives and projects in alignment with CJC's strategic priorities.



**Kengu Christine** is CJC's new Capacity Building Fellow. She assists and supports the capacity-building team.



**Esther Kim** is CJC's new Policy Fellow. She provides support and assistance to the policy team's advocacy and initiatives for city, state, and federal workforce development policies.

## Launching Our Career Readiness Curriculum

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The CJC team is excited to announce the **upcoming release of a free, open-source Career Readiness Curriculum**. This curriculum provides workforce programs with a **customizable, ready-to-use career readiness training for job seekers**. We've taken the traditional "Job Club" lessons and framed these topics within knowledge of behavioral science, trauma informed care, a client-centered mindset, and racial equity.

# Career Readiness Curriculum

2023



As we begin to share our [Anti-Racist Workforce Development System Framework](#) and Implementation guide this month, the Career Readiness Curriculum offers a **practical tool that moves us towards our goal of strengthening the capacity of service providers to build equitable systems for job seekers marginalized by racism**. The curriculum explicitly addresses issues of racism in the workforce system and provides resources and facilitation tools for facilitators guiding these conversations with job seekers.

This curriculum **includes facilitator lesson plans, slide decks, and handouts for participants**. Agencies can use the curriculum lessons sequentially or choose to implement a smaller set of lessons based on their program structure and time with participants. It is our intent that training around curriculum delivery and facilitation (the how) coupled with concrete job search curriculum and activities grounded in brain science research (the what) will positively impact outcomes for people of color in the workforce development system.

The Career Readiness Curriculum will be available for download on our website in the coming weeks and we will also be sharing more about the resource in a

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panel session at the [2nd Annual Chicagoland Workforce Development Symposium](#). We look forward to hearing from practitioners and agencies about their experiences implementing the curriculum.

[You can preview the introduction here.](#)

## SNAP & TANF Employment & Training Initiative



CJC, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services, is providing **training to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment & Training providers in Illinois** for a third year.

This fiscal year, CJC's trainings will **help workforce professionals build their capacity to better meet the employment needs of disadvantaged job seekers, low-income workers, and employers**. These training sessions will help in day-to-day engagement with clients. If you are a SNAP & TANF E&T provider, you can [register for those training sessions here](#).

In response to the ongoing training and support SNAP & TANF E&T providers have expressed that they need, CJC is also **preparing to launch a series of ISETS (Illinois SNAP Employment and Training System) trainings this month**.

CJC has also developed training tools in support of Intake and Referrals Process, Enrollment and Case Management, Adding Employment and Retention Services, and Billing, Reporting, and Staffing – all of which are components in ISETS. Are you an Illinois SNAP & TANF E&T Provider? You can access training tools, such as previously recorded webinars and slide decks to meet your ongoing training needs [here](#).

## **Advocating For Equity In Illinois Workforce Policy:**

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# Implementation Of Governor's Commission Recommendations



At CJC, a core element of our mission is advocating for policy changes that address racial disparities in employment and enhance economic prospects for individuals affected by systemic barriers and racism.

With this mission in mind, **we are eager to express our strong support for implementing the following four key recommendations** outlined in the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access's 2023 report, "Advancing Equity in the

Workforce in Illinois." We firmly believe they represent a significant policy leap toward a more equitable and inclusive workforce system in Illinois.

**Process:** Establishing a robust process aimed at reimagining Illinois' workforce system with a central commitment to inclusion and explicit equity objectives is a meaningful policy development. CJC wholeheartedly endorses this approach, as it seamlessly aligns with our vision of creating pathways to economic opportunities for all Illinois residents, regardless of their socio-economic background or circumstances.

**Data System/Data:** Deploying a user-centered integrated data system is a



transformative policy measure. This system not only streamlines operations by eliminating redundancy but also prioritizes the avoidance of re-traumatization for those seeking services. This is an essential component of ensuring equitable access to workforce development programs. Furthermore, it empowers us with vital data for equity-driven research and evaluation, allowing us to enhance programmatic outcomes continually.

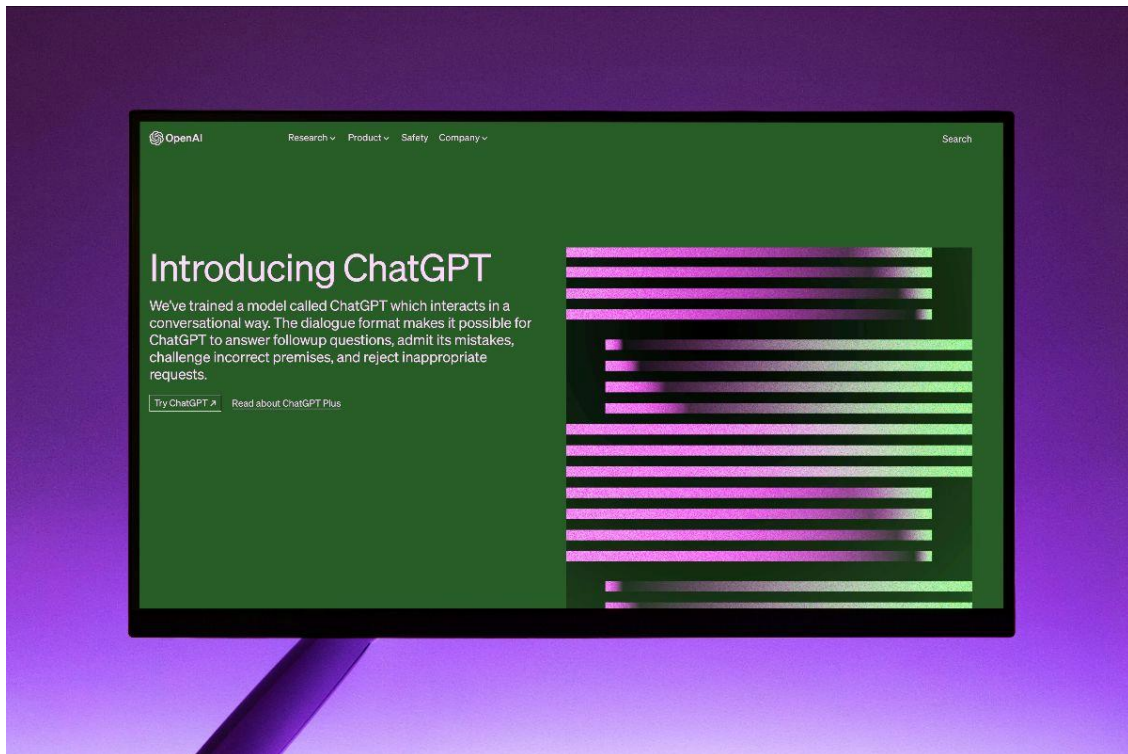
**State Funding:** Establishing a sustainable and substantial funding mechanism for workforce development programs and services represents a monumental step forward in workforce policy. Sufficient funding is imperative to address the multifaceted challenges our community members face, enabling us to expand and augment the impact of our initiatives.

**Leadership:** Creating an empowered leadership role tasked with setting strategic goals and holding stakeholders accountable for achieving equitable outcomes is a commendable policy initiative. Effective leadership plays a pivotal role in driving the necessary changes to advance equity in the workforce.

Our policy team at CJC is fully committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the recommendations. By pursuing these policy initiatives, we can establish a more equitable and inclusive workforce system that benefits all residents of Illinois. Throughout the implementation process, CJC will remain dedicated to informing, advocating, and supporting all stakeholders within the workforce development ecosystem. We aim to work towards a future where equity takes center stage in our workforce development endeavors.

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# AI In Marketing & Communications



Artificial intelligence (AI) is a particularly hot topic in the field of workforce development. According to the World Economic Forums 2020, "[The Future of Jobs Report 2020](#)," **85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labor between humans and machines and 97 million new roles could emerge.** CJC has been having conversations about how to narrow the

digital divide and make sure that the workforce has the skills needed to prepare for the impact of AI.

**We have also started to consider the role AI might play in our own work,** particularly in the areas of marketing and communications. While AI and machine learning have been a part of our day-to-day for years now (think programs like Grammarly or functions like autocomplete in email and other Web-based software), newer platforms like ChatGPT can automatically generate copy for websites, email, social media, and advertising based on user input and machine learning. The programs can mimic style, target specific audiences, and generate pages of content within a matter of seconds.

While **the content provided by these platforms can offer convenience and efficiency** for marketers and communicators who are often stretched thin, particularly in the nonprofit space, they also bring unique concerns. The platforms rely on content from the internet to produce their responses and therefore issues around copyright, plagiarism, ethics, and transparency are important parts of the conversation.

While CJC has not made any decisions about the use of newer AI tools in our own marketing and communications, **we are continuing to monitor the research in the space with curiosity** in order to understand trends. As we search for the most appropriate tools and resources for our work, we will always remain committed to maintaining transparency and ethics in our approach.

**Where You Can Find Us Next  
Quarter**

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### [October 12 - Chicagoland Workforce Development Symposium](#)

8 AM-6 PM at Malcolm X College 1900 West Jackson Boulevard

Chicago, IL 60612



### [October 17 - CJC's Fall Fundraiser](#)

5:30-8:30 PM at Midwest Coast Brewing Co.

2137 W. Walnut St., Chicago, IL 60612

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## **Our Mission**

Together with community and institutional leaders, Chicago Jobs Council is re-imagining our workforce system so all people can thrive through employment.

## **Our Vision**

Our vision is to create an anti-racist workforce development system and employment equity so that everyone can realize their unique pathway out of poverty.



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Support our work with a tax deductible donation.



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