



A PROJECT TO:
REDUCE POVERTY THROUGH A COMMUNITY
WIDE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Bridges Project Steering Committee

Dr. Lisa Bly
Workforce Connection

Courtney Geiger
Goodwill

Aaron Brooks
Holmstrom & Kennedy

Jason Holcomb
Transform Rockford

Carandus Brown
Rockford Housing Authority

Steve Kennedy
Insight Formation

Mary Cacioppi
One Body Collaboratives

Paul Logli
United Way

Pam Clark-Reidenbach
Northern Illinois Center
for Non-Profit Excellence

Marcia Maggio
Swedish American
A Division of UW Health

Ron Clewer
Gorman & Company

Lynn Stainbrook
Rockford Public Library

Becky Cook-Kendall
Rockford Health Council

Trisha Tousant
YMCA

Marlana Dokken
Region 1 Planning

Additional Working Group Members

Bill Aupperle
First Evangelical Covenant Church

Mary Ann Kolls
Workforce Connection

Carol Erickson
University of IL Extension

Melanie Overton
Shelter Care Ministries



About the aha! Process

aha! Process is an award-winning training and publishing company providing workshops, publications, and consulting services to help improve lives and build sustainable success in communities, schools, and higher education. We do this by creating an understanding of the dynamics that cause and maintain poverty from the individual to systems level.

Poverty, middle class, and wealth are about an abundance or lack of resources. Our work helps individuals, businesses, students, and communities build resources for a more successful, sustainable future.

You can guess where we got our name from. Our company was originally RFT Publishing Co., but so many people told us how our work gave them an “aha” moment—that sudden clarity when all the pieces fit together—that we changed our name. We strive to build those moments for you, helping you gain a broader, deeper understanding of economic class and how it impacts your work, your community, and your life.

Rebuilding Lives, Transforming Our Community

One Body Collaboratives

About One Body Collaboratives

One Body Collaboratives is built on the concept of collaboration and has an original mission to unite the Christian Churches to collaboratively work together. In addition to our 100+ Network Partner Churches, representing over 20 denominations; we also have over 40 local ministries and 120 local service agencies within our referral network.

Each year we receive over 1,600 calls to our Resource Coordination Center. The callers are referred by agencies, nonprofits, ministries and churches. Because of our vast referral network and partnerships, we are able to meet over 94% of the needs referred to us annually. The needs that we meet, and the resource provided impact over 650 local families in crisis annually.

Bridges Out of Poverty is a national antipoverty organization that helps people move toward upward mobility. The focus of Bridges is on socioeconomic class differences, and helping people understand the importance of these factors and how they are related to their lives.

Vision

Reducing the social costs of poverty, strengthening the workforce, and building a more prosperous and sustainable community are goals on which most communities agree. aha! Process's Bridges Out of Poverty community support program provides a family of concepts, workshops, and products to help employers, community organizations, social service agencies, and individuals address and reduce poverty in a comprehensive way. Bridges brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty.

One Body Collaboratives (OBC) is the managing organization for the community implementation, including creating a Community of Practice and implementing the Getting Ahead curriculum for individuals in poverty. One Body Collaboratives, through its Resource Coordination Center will provide ongoing support and resources for graduates of the Getting Ahead program.

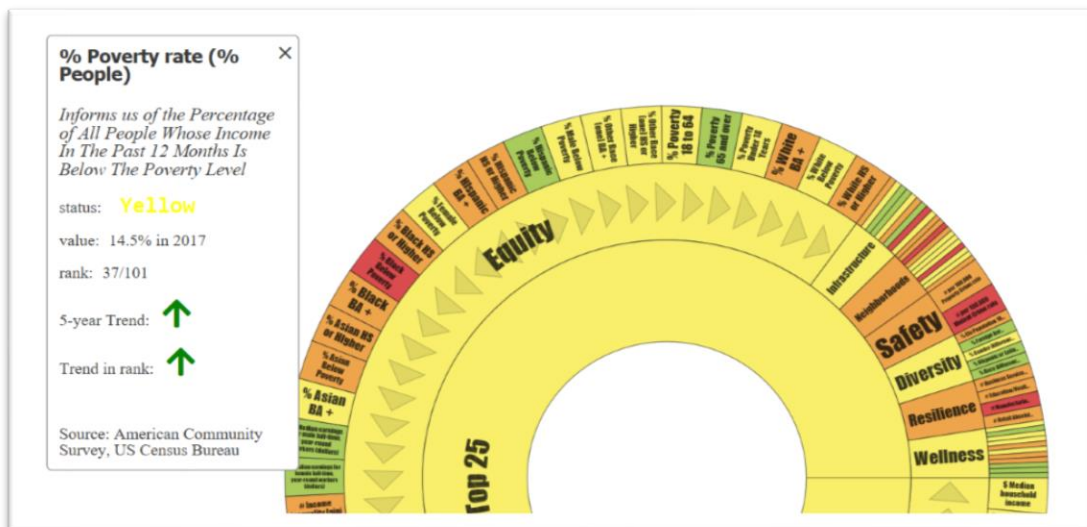
Community Need

We likely do not need to reiterate the well-known fact that there is a high level of distress and need in our community related to poverty, crime, jail & prison reentry, absent fathers, single parenting, multiple disparities including in the arenas of education, health, employment and housing, as well as multiple other social issues. Statistically, Rockford performs poorly with regards to socioeconomic measures.

Traditional governmental and social service agencies are making valiant efforts trying to address poverty and related social issues in our country and our community, yet the indicator needles are for the most part not moving in the right direction. Social distress and resource needs are increasing, while hope and available federal, state, and local governmental resources are decreasing.

Implementing a proven curriculum for those in poverty in our community will aid in assisting individuals to build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families and the community.

According to our Community Scorecard, the Rockford MSA had a poverty rate of 14.5% in 2017; ranking us at 37 out of 101. In comparison, the best community ranking was 8%; and to be a Top 25 community our ranking will need to be less than 13.8%. Conversely, in 2013 our rate was 16.5%, ranking us at 46 out of 101. We have the ability to achieve our goal of being in the Top 25 in this area by 2025, but we must be intentional about it.



An area of concern on our Community Scorecard is generational poverty. In 2017 21.9% of our residents under the age of 18 were in poverty, ranking us 46 out of 101. In comparison, the best community ranking in this area is 9%, and to be in the Top 25 we will need to move the needle down to below 17.9%. Generational Poverty is defined as a family having lived in poverty for at least two generations. By providing a way for the parents of these children to build their resources and become self-sufficient we can greatly impact the generational poverty cycle.

Theory of Change

Bridges Out of Poverty focuses on empowering those in poverty to investigate the barriers in the community that keep people from getting ahead and educates the entire community on the complexities of poverty. The initiative seeks to empower those in poverty to identify and use the abilities they already have to solve their own problems through analyzing their realities. The Community of Practice will bring together community leaders, faith communities, employers, community organizations, social service agencies, and individuals address and reduce poverty in a comprehensive way.

Outcomes

Bridges Out of Poverty has a set of measurements for the Getting Ahead curriculum. The measurements indicate how resources and stability increase for graduates, there are also Return on Investment indicators for graduates of the program. The Bridges Out of Poverty support program helps communities:

- Move individuals from poverty to self-sufficiency
- Reduce social costs related to crime, poor health, and welfare
- Strengthen educational attainment and job skills
- Enhance economic development
- Improve on-the-job productivity
- Revitalize neighborhoods
- Build sustainable communities where everyone can live well

Bridges Focus Areas



K-12

Guiding Educators to Better Engage Students and Parents



Community

Creating Healthy, Sustainable Communities



Higher Education

Enhancing Outcomes for First-Generation Students



Criminal Justice

Reducing Recidivism and Saving Taxpayer Dollars



Healthcare

Improving Access and Costs in Individual and Population Health



Workplace

Increasing Employee Retention and Productivity



Getting Ahead

Helping the Under-Resourced Achieve Stability

Project Components

While Bridges Out of Poverty has 7 Focus Areas, we will begin our implementation locally by focusing on the **Community** and **Getting Ahead** areas, which include the components outlined below:



Community

Creating Healthy, Sustainable Communities

Community

Implementing the Community Focus Area begins with a Bridges Community Workshop.

Bridges Out of Poverty Community Workshops are known for changing the way people think about poverty and economic class. People have “aha” moments that deepen into insights that are so powerful that there is no going back to their old way of thinking. These in turn deepen into paradigm shifts that alter every aspect of their work on poverty. Communities that use the Bridges constructs recognize that to address poverty effectively we must engage the whole community.



Adapted from J. Pfarr Consulting

This workshop moves communities toward sustainability where everyone can live well. By discussing the four areas of research into the causes of poverty, the workshop deepens understanding of the costs to communities.

The goal is to build a comprehensive approach to reducing poverty.

- Develop a community- and relationship-based approach to poverty.
- Create a structure to support and maintain the initiative.
- Engage all classes, sectors, and political persuasions.

All sectors and economic classes need to be at the table and speaking the same language, and this workshop is the foundation of that ongoing work.

Anticipated Workshop Date: April 2020

Anticipated Attendees: 150

Once the Bridges Community Workshop is held, a **Bridges Community of Practice** is formed. The Community of Practice brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty.

The goals of creating a Community of Practice are to:

- move individuals from poverty to self-sufficiency
- reduce social costs to crime, poor health and welfare
- strengthen educational attainment and job skills
- improve on-the-job productivity
- revitalize neighborhoods and build sustainable communities where everyone can live well

The Community of Practice will host quarterly workshops and will include business, government, faith and community leaders. We anticipate more than 50 area agencies and churches participating in the quarterly workshops.

The Bridges Out of Poverty model is currently used in 35 states and 7 countries; there are currently 33 communities across the world that have established Communities of Practice.

Commitments have already been made from the following organizations to be a part of the Community of Practice:

Crusader Clinic
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church
One Body Collaboratives
Rockford Health Council

Rockford Public Library
Rockford Rescue Mission
Shelter Care Ministries
Transform Rockford

Unitarian Universalist Church
United Way
University of IL Extension
YMCA of Rock River Valley

Anticipated Start Date: May 2020

Anticipated Attendees: 50+



Getting Ahead

Helping the Under-Resourced
Achieve Stability

Getting Ahead

Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World is a 10-session curriculum that helps individuals in poverty build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families, and their communities. The curriculum will help our residents in poverty move from poverty to self-sufficiency. It is a proven curriculum currently being used in 46 states and 5 countries with over 80,000 graduates.

The Getting Ahead curriculum facilitates knowledge gains about poverty and how to begin to “get ahead” when living in poverty. Participants leave the program with more knowledge about how to avoid financial predators, what kind of rent they can afford, and what kind of interest they can legally be charged. They are leaving with increased knowledge of themselves and the resources they need to move forward economically and with an individualized plan for beginning to increase their resources.

Rockford Housing Authority, in partnership with our Bridges project, has implemented the Getting Ahead In-A-Just-Getting-By World curriculum internally with their residents, and are already having great results.

One Body Collaboratives will be partnering with the Riverfront YMCA and Judson University to provide the curriculum in a Spring and Fall session in 2020. Additionally, there are churches and other local agencies who are interested in hosting the classes at their respective locations.

We will seek agencies and churches to refer individuals to participate in the Getting Ahead curriculum. Individuals will go through an application process to determine criteria of: willingness to attend all 10 class sessions, willingness to help create and live by the rules of the group, personal motivation, and they must demonstrate personal stability.

Staying Ahead Network

When offering Getting Ahead classes to people in poverty, a promise is also made that the sponsor and the community will provide long-term support while graduates are building resources and transition out of poverty. One Body Collaboratives, through its Resource Coordination Center will provide ongoing support for graduates of the program, in addition to building our **Staying Ahead Network** of community support.

Each graduate will also be paired with a Mentor who can provide them with a positive relationship and ongoing support for up to one year.

Bridges Community Results

Listed below are some of the results that communities are achieving through their Bridges Communities of Practice and Getting Ahead programs. Unemployment rates have decreased among participants, full time employment has increased, and many have gone on to gain post-secondary education.

Getting Ahead/Bridges Initiative, Iowa

- 174 graduates since 2008 with a completion rate of 70%
- Unemployment among participants dropped from 51% to 25% one year after graduation
- Full-time employment near doubled one year after graduation

Career Pathways at Youngstown State University, Ohio

- 300 graduates in 1.5 years, with 81% completion rate
- Full time employment increased from 31% to 76%
- 58% pursued post-secondary endeavors

St. Joseph County Bridges Out of Poverty, Indiana

- Graduated more than 400 people in Getting Ahead
- Has presented Bridges Out of Poverty Workshops to more than 3,000 people

Getting Ahead, Colorado

- 165 Getting Ahead Graduates
- Unemployment by program graduates dropped from 60% to 42%

There have been a number of studies of the Getting Ahead curriculum and its impact on communities, the research team doing this work agrees that Getting Ahead is progressing toward evidence-based status.

Additional Focus Areas

As referenced above, there are additional Bridges Focus Areas that we have had interest from partner organizations in implementing. There include the Criminal Justice, Workplace and Healthcare focus areas.



Criminal Justice

Reducing Recidivism and Saving
Taxpayer Dollars

Criminal Justice

The Purpose of the Getting Ahead while Getting Out Reentry Model is to provide citizens returning from incarceration and their families a comprehensive, community- and relationship-based approach to reentry that begins in pre-release and follows through with long-term support.

By exploring new information and doing a self-assessment, they build future stories for themselves. The adult learning experience is agenda-free, allowing the returning citizens to take charge of their lives and build a Getting Ahead Reentry Plan that will help them contribute to positive changes in their families and community.



Workplace

Increasing Employee Retention and
Productivity

Workplace

There is no question that increased worker stability boosts productivity, retention, and morale, which leads to greater profitability, but it may yet be a challenge employer's need to address.

Getting Ahead in the Workplace is a workbook of 15 facilitated sessions to help under-resourced people build resources and gain control over their future stories, for a better life at home and at work.



Healthcare

Improving Access and Costs in
Individual and Population Health

Healthcare

Reducing readmissions and improving costs are two primary goals of the healthcare industry. Bridges solutions enable healthcare professionals in hospitals, clinics, physician offices, and public health organizations to better understand the obstacles to good health many people face, develop strategies to remove those obstacles, and help build the resources patients need to lead healthier lives.

Project Glossary

Bridges Project Steering Committee: Committee meets semi-annually to implement the Project Work Plan determine Project Stakeholders and provide ongoing Evaluation of the project.

Bridges Working Groups: Groups focused on key areas of the project implementation. These include the Getting Ahead Working Group, Data Collection Working Group and the Community of Practice Working Group. Any interested community member can participate in these groups.

Bridges Community of Practice: This group is comprised of the Top 50 individuals (business/community leaders, faith leaders, government leaders, agency/nonprofit leaders) who will be invited to quarterly workshops to discuss policies that address poverty, identify and eliminate barriers and develop the infrastructure to build human capacity and opportunity.

Getting Ahead: The program in which people from poverty graduate after taking the 10-session course.

Getting Ahead Facilitator: An individual that will be certified as a trainer (6-hour training session) and will facilitate a 10-session Getting Ahead course.

Getting Ahead Mentor: An individual that will be connected to a specific Getting Ahead graduate to offer ongoing support for up to one year.

For More Information

Contact: Mary Cacioppi, Executive Director, One Body Collaboratives
Direct Line: 815-985-1311; Email: Mary.Cacioppi@OneBodyCollaboratives.org

Websites:

www.OneBodyCollaboratives.org

www.ahaprocess.com

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Rebuilding Lives, Transforming Our Community

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