

Workforce Warriors

Los Angeles Black Worker Center's Bold Battle for Equity



A Case Study and Process Evaluation of LA Black Worker Center's Workforce Equity Demonstration Project

UCLA Center for the Advancement of Racial Equity at Work



**LOS ANGELES
BLACK WORKER
CENTER**

**1000
STRONG**

JULY 2024

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About Us & Acknowledgements

UCLA CARE at Work: The Center for the Advancement of Racial Equity at Work (CARE at Work), housed in the UCLA Labor Center, engages Black workers and economic justice advocates and facilitates innovative solutions that address the needs of Black working-class people. Through a school-to-movement pathway of service, teaching, capacity building, and research, our purpose is to reveal conditions of Black work in Southern California under global racial capitalism and to model approaches for change.

Los Angeles Black Worker Center: The mission of the Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LABWC) is to increase access to quality jobs, reduce employment discrimination, and improve industries that employ Black workers through action and unionization. LABWC envisions a world where Black workers thrive, where workplaces are accountable to us and our rights, and where all have equitable access to meaningful, sustained, and quality employment.

Before reading, please take a moment to acknowledge the people and organizations that have put in countless hours over nearly a decade to make this work possible.

LABWC Co-Executive Directors: Janel Belovette Jenkins and La Tonya Harris

LABWC Ready 2 Work Staff: De'Andrea Lottier Ross, Na'Desha Enoch, Yodit Semu, Tiffany Hughes, and Qiaira Broomfield

LABWC 1000 Strong Campaign Staff: Trina Traylor, Ron Collins II, Boo Athj, Andrene Scott, Gregory Lewis, Ashley Clayton, and Elizabeth Ducksworth

LABWC Organizing Team: Jeremiah Gordon, Zheniah Houston, Bobby Sampson, Kishi Hundley, Devon Williams, and Anita Trahan

1000 Strong Coalition Members (past and present): Simboa Wright (SEIU 721), Lori Condinus (AFSCME DC 36), Amber Roth, Steven Simon, Martha Delgado (WERC), Rob Nothoff, Rosemarie Molina, Patricia Recinos (LA Fed), and Marleen Fonseca (EAA)

City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works: Kevin Gresham, President Aura Garcia, former President Greg Good, and LASAN Director Barbara Romero

CARE at Work Research Team (past and present): Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (now State Senator), Deja Thomas, Yrvane Pageot, Demetria Murphy, Antonia Izuogu, Hana Abdelatty, and Lorraine Wangari

Report Production: Hilarie Ashton (Copy Editor); Lauren Iverson (Designer, Free to Form, Inc.)

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Executive Summary

Work inequity is deeply intertwined with the issues of homelessness, incarceration, occupational segregation, and unemployment, all issues that disproportionately impact Black communities and are at the root of the Black jobs crisis. The 1000 Strong Coalition, anchored by the Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LABWC), posits that a full employment model, from training to job retention in public sector jobs, is a reliable solution to the longstanding Black jobs crisis in Los Angeles. The Coalition's north star of building and strengthening pipelines for Black workers into public sector jobs led to the formation of the City of Los Angeles' Workforce Demonstration (WED) Project.

The WED Project is a full employment model that codifies the City of Los Angeles' commitment to a supported pathway for "good jobs" beyond entry-level roles and includes pre-apprenticeship and on-the-job training for Black workers. The City of LA's Department of Public Works (DPW), responsible for public health infrastructure, has met this incredible opportunity to utilize a full employment model to both address this crisis and meet the needs for safe and clean spaces by hiring more Black workers. **This intentional effort to hire and retain Black workers in unionized public sector jobs does two things: 1) positions Los Angeles as a leader in advancing racial equity, and 2) builds Black financial stability through quality unionized public sector employment.**

The City of Los Angeles made a commitment to Black workers through the WED Project, and it took 'years of dedication' from many stakeholders to bring this project to life. The formation of the 1000 Strong Coalition in 2018, early research done by the Advancement Project, and commitments from then-Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2019 all led to a WED Motion signed by then-DPW Board President Greg Good in February 2021. The motion called for a framework and action plan for implementation of what would become the WED Project.¹ Crucial tactics in these early stages included relationship building, organizing, strategy calls, and defining what could be possible for Black workers in the City of Los Angeles. This deep planning and organizing laid the groundwork for a contract with the City of Los Angeles and LABWC for the recruitment and training for 200 vacant City positions that was signed in June 2022, signaling the opportunity for LABWC to actually put their plan and recommendations into action with their partners.

Essential to this plan is the equitable and sustainable participation of Black workers and community stakeholders to realize the full potential of WED. In addition to the DPW and LABWC, crucial anchor partners have included other members of the 1000 Strong Coalition – the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 36 (AFSCME DC 36), Service Employees International Union Local 721 (SEIU 721), the Los Angeles Federation of Labor (LA Fed), Engineers and Architects Association Union (EAA), UCLA Labor Center, and the Worker Education and Resource Center (WERC).



WED in Practice

The WED Project covered participants' journeys to becoming full-time City of LA employees from initial outreach to employment. To make the work happen, the project had five primary goals.

1. Build a formal working coalition consisting of WERC, the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board, LABWC, LA Fed, SEIU 721, and AFSCME DC 36.
2. Pass policies through the City Council and Board of Public Works that establish pre-employment, employment, and career advancement pathways.
3. Identify vacancies, green job classifications, and promotion opportunities within DPW.
4. Provide a training program for job seekers and incumbent workers that prepares new trainees for civil service employment and prepares new and incumbent workers for green jobs and promotion opportunities within DPW.
5. Work with DPW department managers to determine diversity and inclusion strategies that will ensure racial equity in targeted classifications.

Ultimately, the WED Project met all of its practical goals for the first two years. The WED Project is a quantitative success, with the majority of those placed staying on the job. The only goal that has proven challenging is identifying vacancies for participants within DPW, given ever-changing budgets and political priorities. The 1000 Strong Coalition is actively working with the City to identify a more streamlined process so that that goal can be fully achieved and systematized. The coalition has shifted to working together to partner with the City on better understanding the hiring challenges that may contribute to this.

WED as a Standard for Workforce Development

The WED model does more than just train workers impacted by the Black jobs crisis and provide job placement: it also supports the personal and collective development of the Black community and the Black worker justice movement. LABWC partnered with UCLA CARE at Work to document and evaluate the first two years of the project, including the first two cohorts. The evaluation illuminated important insights gathered from cohort participants, WED project staff, union leaders, and CARE at Work about the success of the project defined by:



- 1. Tailoring the program to their identities.** This includes advertising programs to Black workers, acknowledging the specific needs of intersectional identities (women, queer, youth, etc.), and supporting participants in identifying their own personal goals during the program.
- 2. Demonstrating the full employment model as the groundwork for solving the Black jobs crisis.** The project stands out for many participants as their first and only positive working experience as a Black worker, shifting the perspective of everyone involved in the program. This highlight is then compounded by the 80% job retention rate for those placed with the City that supports further positive working experiences and financial stability.
- 3. Establishing foundational strategic partnerships between the 1000 Strong Coalition and the City.** The formation of these partnerships took years of relationship building and has had beneficial effects for upcoming cohorts. The DPW commitment has also played a key role in the success as the only City of LA department with an MOU with LABWC to hire 200 WED graduates.

From Demonstration to Permanent Program: Recommendations

Leveraging insights from the listening sessions, follow-up interviews, and meetings with stakeholders, we provide the following summary of strengths and recommendations for the continued success in transitioning this demonstration project to a permanently established program.

- 1. The City of Los Angeles can further facilitate local partnerships to enhance the reach of the WED Project to prospective Black workers in the public sector.** The WED Project can benefit from partnerships with all City of LA departments and their respective labor unions. Broadening this scope can also help meet the hiring needs of other departments during the current budget deficit that has led to a limited hiring mandate, for which WED is one of three recommended pathway programs for any hiring.
- 2. Expand the classifications and guarantee career ladders for all hired WED participants to ensure that the program does not promote occupational desegregation.** This is an opportunity for the City of LA to ensure retention and promotion of Black workers in a variety of roles. It is crucial that the City of LA (in collaboration with LABWC) develop and promote clear career pathways for WED participants' promotion to ensure long-term employment.
- 3. Remove civil service exam requirements that put limitations on the scalability of the WED Program.** The civil service exam requirement caps the WED pathway into the City at the maintenance worker/entry level, which promotes occupational segregation. In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Tatum et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts* found that standardized civil service promotional exams administered in Boston disadvantaged Black and Hispanic test takers.ⁱⁱ If the City of LA is truly committed to addressing the Black jobs crisis, placement into mid-level jobs is just as crucial as in entry-level jobs.

The WED Project is a valuable model for programs with similar goals nationwide. As the public sector's responsibility to Black workers, the WED Project has created a new standard for a public sector full employment workforce development model that has the potential to play a crucial role in solving the Black jobs crisis long term. There is a clear opportunity for the 1000 Strong Coalition, led by LABWC and the City of LA, to continue to take the lead in demonstrating how public sector recruitment, hiring, and retention practices can be a powerful tool in solving the Black jobs crisis through permanently establishing the WED Project.

Introduction

As proven through numerous studies, research, and history itself, race-blind policies do not undo the impacts of intentionally racist policies.ⁱⁱⁱ Work inequity is deeply intertwined with homelessness, incarceration, occupational segregation, and unemployment, all issues that disproportionately impact Black communities and are at the root of the Black jobs crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this crisis worse, with 85% of Black Californians filing an unemployment claim in 2020 and 98% of Black Californians without a high school diploma filing a claim.^{iv} The 1000 Strong Coalition, anchored by the Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LABWC), posits that a full employment model, from training to job retention in public sector jobs, is a reliable solution to the longstanding Black jobs crisis in Los Angeles.

The Coalition's north star, of building and strengthening pipelines for Black workers into public sector jobs, led to the formation of the City of Los Angeles' Workforce Demonstration (WED) Project. The WED Project is a full employment model that codifies the City of Los Angeles' commitment to a supported pathway for "good jobs" beyond entry-level roles and includes pre-apprenticeship and on-the-job training for Black workers. This is a high road vision and sector-based strategy that began as a two-year demonstration project to place Black workers into middle-class, career pathway jobs in the City of LA's Department of Public Works (DPW). This project aimed to contribute to an equitable COVID-19 economic recovery by accelerating pathways to good public sector jobs for the City's most vulnerable communities. It also meets the City's benchmarks to "green up" the City through placement in jobs that carry out the City's sustainability initiatives, contributing to then-Mayor Eric Garcetti's effort to create 300,000 green jobs by 2035 and 400,000 by 2050. The WED Project is a crucial step toward economic justice for Black workers and the City.

The City of Los Angeles' Department of Public Works, responsible for public health infrastructure, has met this incredible opportunity to use a full employment model to both address this crisis and meet the needs for safe and clean spaces by hiring more Black workers. The Board of Public Works unanimously approved this measure on February 26, 2021, requesting that the Board President report a recommended framework and action plan after seeking input from key stakeholders.^v Essential to this plan is the equitable and sustainable participation of Black workers and community stakeholders to realize the full potential of WED. In addition to the DPW and LABWC, anchor partners include other members of the 1000 Strong Coalition: the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 36 (AFSCME DC 36), Service Employees International Union Local 721 (SEIU 721), the Los Angeles Federation of Labor (LA Fed), Engineers and Architects Association Union (EAA), UCLA Labor Center's Center for Advancement of Racial Equity at Work (CARE), and the Worker Education and Resource Center (WERC).



Each of these entities provide unique value that will continue to benefit each cohort, including program facilitation, knowledge of workers rights after job placement, and program evaluation. The WED Project benefits from partnerships within Los Angeles that connect stakeholders within the City of Los Angeles (i.e., DPW, Personnel, Council Offices, etc.), labor unions, workshop facilitators from various organizations, the Los Angeles Black Workers Center, and CARE at Work.

LABWC partnered with CARE at Work to document and evaluate the first two years of the project, including the first two cohorts. The study used a mixed methods research justice model and centered the experience and expertise of the worker and community-based organizations involved in the project. The anchor partners were involved in the design, fielding, analysis, and dissemination plan. This report will place the WED Project in context of the history of Black workers in the public sector, as well as describe WED in practice via its program elements and project outcomes, evaluated by workforce industry standards. Key to the evaluation are the participant experiences contextualizing how this project is a standard for workforce development. Finally, the report ends with a series of recommendations to transition from a demonstration project to a permanent partnership program. WED brings together worker centers, unions, employer (City of LA), and community stakeholders to create a solution to the Black jobs crisis.



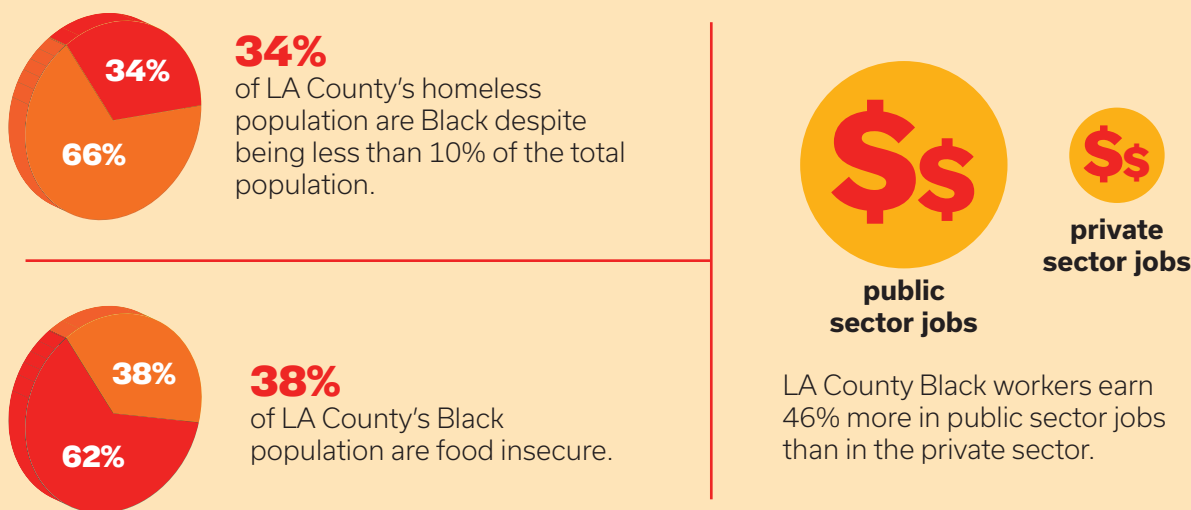
WED is Public Sector's Responsibility to Black Workers

The 1000 Strong Coalition aims to continue the long tradition of public sector employment as a key tool in addressing racial inequity since the 20th century. The Biden Administration demonstrates recognition of this tradition through Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.^{vi} This E.O. inherently acknowledges the role that public sector employment can play in achieving racial equity in this country, a fact at the core of the Coalition's work. Numerous studies confirm that Black workers' socioeconomic outcomes improve if they have public sector employment, from health insurance and retirement, to stronger protections from discrimination.^{vii}

In LA County, roughly 1 in 5 Black workers work in the public sector; thus government hiring and retention practices impacts Black workers more acutely than others.^{viii} Research confirms that strengthening pipelines for Black workers into unionized public sector jobs is an effective strategy to solve the Black jobs crisis. Despite this, austerity, privatization, and implicit bias have chipped away at pathways into public sector jobs, which particularly impact Black workers. The WED Project is a demonstration of a commitment to address the Black jobs crisis at the local level.

FIGURE 1: Disproportionate Struggle and Public Sector Outcomes for Black Workers

Black Workers in LA County are disproportionately struggling with the cost of housing, and public sector jobs is a solution due to the higher incomes and stability.



Thomas, D., Smallwood-Cuevas, L., Waheed, S. (2020). Reimagined Recovery: Black Workers, the Public Sector, and Covid-19. Center for the Advancement of Racial Equity (CARE) At Work at UCLA Labor Center.

The 1000 Strong Coalition endeavored to address income-related inequalities like homelessness and food insecurity, as seen in Figure 1. Loss of income is cited as one of the number one causes of homelessness in California,^{xii} and food affordability is one of the main components of food insecurity. Unionized public sector jobs provide Black workers and their communities financial stability that is crucial in a time of near-constant economic shifts. **Thus, this intentional effort to hire and retain Black workers in unionized public sector jobs does two things: 1) meets the mission of the highest level of governance to advance racial equity through government practices, and 2) builds Black financial stability through quality unionized public sector employment.**

WED Project Overview

The City of Los Angeles made a commitment to Black workers through the WED Project, but it took years and dedication from many stakeholders to bring it to life. For nearly a decade, countless hours have been put into this demonstration project by LABWC, SEIU 721, AFSCME DC 36, the City of LA's Department of Public Works (DPW), and many more. Figure 2 gives a brief snapshot of the timeline of this project in its early planning stages. Crucial tactics in these early stages included relationship building, organizing, making strategy calls, and defining what could be possible for Black workers in the City of LA. The formation of the 1000 Strong Coalition in 2018, early research done by the Advancement Project, and commitments from then-Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2019 all led to a WED Motion signed by then-DPW Board President Greg Good in 2021. The motion called for a framework and action plan for implementation of what would become the WED Project.

The WED Motion signed in February 2021 kicked off a year and a half of deep work: planning, funding applications, staffing work, organizing Black workers, and strategic planning and partnership. This planning and organizing laid the groundwork for a signed contract with the City of LA and LABWC. This contract covered the recruitment and training of Black Angelenos for 200 vacant City positions. This was an opportunity for LABWC to actually put their plan and recommendations into action with their partners. Figure 2 sketches out how the Coalition put its plan into action, which will be discussed in later sections.



FIGURE 2: Timeline Before Project Launch

2018

1000 Strong Coalition begins to form, consisting of LABWC, SEIU 721, AFSCME 36, LA Federation of Labor, and UCLA Labor Center.

LABWC and LA Fed (in collaboration with the Advancement Project) commission a study on the impact of public-sector union jobs on Black workers and the Black middle class in Los Angeles.

2019

The office of then-Mayor Eric Garcetti makes a commitment to create an ambitious Civil and Human Rights Initiative that would place 1000 Black Angelenos in City of Los Angeles jobs by 2022 through established programs such as the Targeted Local Hire Program.

A team is established to examine the impact of Targeted Local Hire on the Black community and make recommendations to meet the Initiative's placement goal. The team consists of the Mayor's Office, Bureau of Contracts Administration, and the Personnel Department, and the 1000 Strong Coalition.

2020

While an important program, it becomes clear that Targeted Local Hire is not the appropriate programmatic vehicle to carry through the commitment made by Mayor Eric Garcetti.

The 1000 Strong Coalition begins to work towards strategic planning, partnership development, identifying appropriate funding, and embedding credible oversight to create a program with the power to create real change for Black workers in Los Angeles. ***This process develops the WED Project.***

2021

FEBRUARY 26

The WED Motion is signed by then-Board President of the Dept. of Public Works, Greg Good. This motion includes a request that the Board President provide a framework and action plan for the WED Project. The 1000 Strong Coalition, led by LABWC, worked diligently to create a framework and action plan, as well as to secure key partners like the Worker Education and Resource Center (WERC) and key funding like High Road Training Partnerships (HRTP) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2022

JUNE 10

Contract No. C-140429 between the City of LA and the LABWC is made and entered. The contract includes the recruitment and training of Black Angelenos for 200 vacant City positions.

OCTOBER 8

LABWC receives a total of 200 applications for WED participation.

LABWC reviews applications on a first come, first serve basis.

OCTOBER 31

The "Ready to Work" (R2W) WED Bootcamp launches and is overseen by LABWC.

31 out of 200 individuals make it through the vetting process to attend the R2W Bootcamp.

The onboarding process with the Personnel Department starts.

DECEMBER 3

A total of 31 individuals graduate from the first the Ready to Work Bootcamp of the WED Project.

Twenty four graduates set to start working in the Bureau of Sanitation.

2023

MAY 15

A total of 14 individuals graduate from the second Ready to Work Bootcamp of the WED project.

JULY 20

Six R2W WED Cohort II graduates are hired by the City: five as vocational workers in the Bureau of Sanitation and one in Engineering via the WED Project.

One R2W WED Cohort I graduate is also hired by the Bureau of Sanitation.

While not covered as a part of this evaluation at the time of writing of this report, three additional cohorts have been completed and 45 workers placed.

Project and Outcome Goals

As demonstrated in the above timeline, the WED Project was intentionally and strategically crafted to create long-lasting opportunities for Black workers in Los Angeles to access LA City jobs. Given that intention, the project had specific goals and outcomes for the first two cohorts to ensure success. The details of the initial overall goals and outcome goals for the WED Project are as follows:

Project Goals

1. Build a formal working coalition consisting of WERC, the Los Angeles DPW, the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board, LABWC, LA Fed, SEIU 721, and AFSCME DC 36.
2. Create policy through the City Council and Board of Public Works that establish pre-employment, employment, and career advancement pathways.
3. Identify vacancies, green job classifications, and promotion opportunities within DPW.
4. Provide a training program for job seekers and incumbent workers that prepares new trainees for civil service employment, as well as green jobs and promotion opportunities within DPW.
5. Work with DPW department managers to determine diversity and inclusion strategies that will ensure racial equity in targeted classifications.

Outcome Goals

1. 25 participants complete job training program and get placed in full time jobs



WED in Practice

The WED Project covered participants' journeys to become full-time City of Los Angeles employees from initial outreach to becoming fully-covered City of LA union workers. Figure 3 shows the journey a Black worker would follow to obtain a job with the City of LA through the WED Project as initially planned.

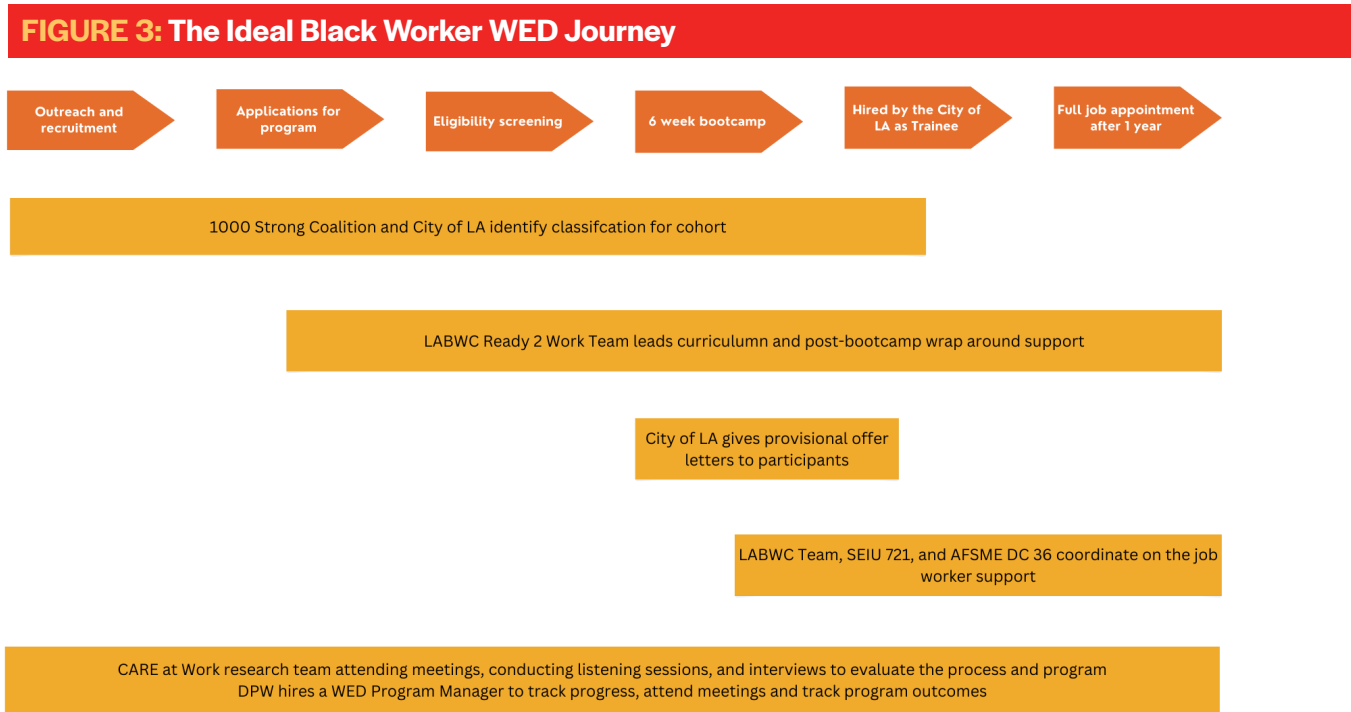


Figure 3 demonstrates how the WED Project incorporates workforce development industry standards for achieving racial equity in the workforce, like wrap-around services, culturally responsive curriculum, and job placement. The work that the Coalition does to identify City of LA job classifications with vacancies is crucial, as this project is meant to be a full employment model. A full employment model often requires strategic coordination and meetings among all Coalition members, DPW, and City personnel staff. The job classifications for the first two cohorts were identified in the Bureau of Sanitation, and continued work is being done to identify additional positions across DPW.

A barrier in identifying the classifications has been the civil service exam. The civil service exam requirement limits the WED participant job placements into entry level/maintenance positions, which severely shrinks the pool of vacant positions available to WED graduates. Unfortunately, the civil service exam barrier in this instance is unsurprising as civil service exams are known to be discriminatory. Civil service exams were first introduced federally in the U.S. in 1955 as the Federal Service Entrance Exam.^{xiv} After decades of lawsuits and complaints of discrimination, civil service exams became more specialized and diverse across agencies and state and local governments within the USA Hire system. Although the current USA Hire and California civil service exams aim to prevent racial bias in the hiring process, they do not tackle the fundamental issue associated with discrimination for Black workers and other people of global majority civil service applicants: standardized exams. In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Tatum et al. v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts* found that standardized civil service promotional exams administered in Boston disadvantaged Black and Hispanic test takers.^{xv} In the City of LA, the exams vary between open exams and promotional exams and are administered by the Board of Civil Service Commissioners. While an ongoing challenge to overcome, LABWC has continued forward with the job classifications and placements they do have access to for the WED Project. The following will give an overview of the outreach and recruitment process, the Ready to Work bootcamp curriculum, and the forms of wrap-around support.

Outreach + Recruitment

LABWC is a trusted community partner and messenger, helping jump-start recruitment for the WED Project. LABWC brought their robust organizing staff to the outreach process, building year-round community and relationships with Black workers across Los Angeles. The organizing activities include five active worker committees, mobilization for rallies and public hearings, canvassing, legal aid clinics, and more. LABWC can embed outreach and recruitment for this program in their ongoing organizing work that reaches hundreds of Black Angelenos monthly.



The outreach for this program resulted in an exceptionally outsized demand that went beyond the capacity of the demonstration project. All interested workers were invited to an orientation to ensure that the WED Project would be a good fit for them given their personal goals. The orientation shared program expectations as well as the LABWC's vision and goals. Within the first month of launching outreach activities and running an orientation, LABWC received over 200 applications for Cohorts 1 and 2; after screening for eligibility, 31 were chosen for Cohort 1 and 14 for Cohort 2. Individuals who were not a good fit for the program because they were not impacted by the Black jobs crisis or other reasons were referred to similar pathway programs.

One important change from Cohort 1 to Cohort 2 was the shift to identity-based cohorts. The reasons for this will be detailed later under wrap-around services and participant experiences, but by having identity-based cohorts, staff was able to efficiently streamline support services for the cohorts. Since this shift, the cohort themes have been: Cohort 2 gender-expansiveness, Cohort 3 youth, and Cohorts 4 and 5, open groups with dedicated support.

Ready 2 Work Bootcamp

Once participants are admitted into the program, they begin the WED Ready 2 Work (R2W) Bootcamp, a six-week intensive facilitated by LABWC to prepare workers for City of Los Angeles employment. The WED R2W Bootcamp is tailored to the classifications the Coalition secured for that cohort, ensuring they have the skills needed for those specific roles. This tailoring underscores the importance of involvement of DPW's Bureau of Sanitation, to ensure that the participants are adequately prepared for their future jobs.

Over the six-week period, participants learn how to succeed as City of LA workers. The Bootcamp covers Microsoft skills (Excel, Word, etc.), training and speakers sharing how to be successful as a city worker, and specific skills training needed for the classifications available for that cohort. Cohorts also received Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response certification training (HAZWOPER) provided by the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) program. Participants are also supported in obtaining the Class C driver's licenses necessary for certain jobs. Additional session topics include: developing an effective resume, preparing for successful interviews, navigating challenges that may occur in the workplace, meeting employer expectations, and balance work/life priorities. All components of the bootcamp are designed to prepare participants for long-term success by grounding the bootcamp in own goals for their lives, families, and communities.

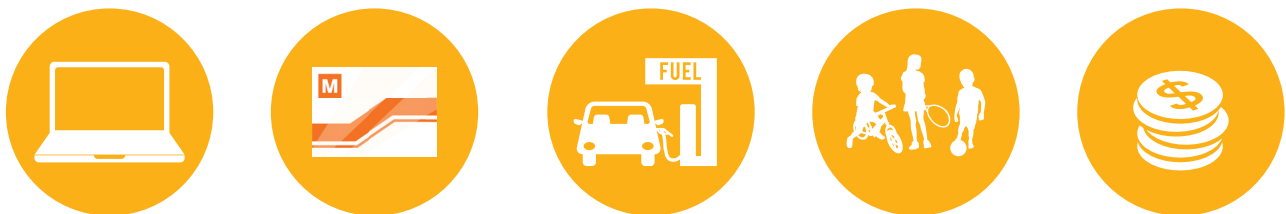
The Ready 2 Work program is a pillar program of LABWC. It prepares Black workers for a variety of sectors through a series of workshops that provide job skills training and industry-specific mentorship to Black workers. The program's goal is to support the LABWC community's professional success and have access to meaningful careers with fair wages and benefits.

Wrap-Around Support

A key component of the success of LABWC's Ready 2 Work program is the wrap-around support and mentorship. For the WED R2W participants, LABWC staff work closely with participants and WERC to provide case management for all participants and provide support and services to ensure completion of the program. The identity-based cohorts also helped to ensure the wrap-around support were effective, as staff could focus on the mutual needs that are more likely to occur with identity-based cohorts. For example, compared to other participants, the youth in Cohorts 1 and 2 showed an increased need for supportive mental health services that do not lead to carceral outcomes. LABWC is looking at budding partnerships for wrap-around support, especially for youth participants, with organization like the Earthlodge Center for Transformation and the AMAAD Institute (Arming Minorities Against Addiction & Disease). Additionally, City employees who are member leaders of the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 721 are stepping up to provide support through peer worker mentorship.

Figure 4 shows other methods of support offered to participants. The organizing and base-building principles that LABWC infuses into all of its work create space for open communication between participants and staff so that needs can be communicated and addressed in a timely manner. This also contributes to the participants feeling like they've joined a community rather than simply a job training program. For those who accept a job offer as a trainee within the Department of Public Works, support is coordinated with their respective union, and those not placed are able to get support via the broader Ready 2 Work program.

FIGURE 4: Support Offered



Furthermore, building on the earn-and learn-model that has worked for decades, participants in WED R2W receive financial support. LABWC secured public and private funds via the Federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, the State High Road Training Partnership, the Hilton Foundation, the Broad Foundation, and the LA City Board of Public Works, to fund the program's cost as well as enabling the WED Project to provide all participants with up to \$5,000 to compensate them for their time. This funding also offsets the lost income that participants incur by having to attend and commute to training and take time away from their other jobs during the six-week period.

Overall, the relational, tangible, and financial support offered in this program are in full alignment with standards and expectations for workforce development programs serving disadvantaged populations.^{xvi} These industry standard recommendations include: establishing partnerships and community relationships with groups who also have a racial purpose as a network for support and sustainable outcomes; collecting and using disaggregated data on employer and program participants; mediating the challenges to success participants face; providing wrap-around support services beyond the education and training programs; and evaluating workforce development by participant progress and outcomes.^{xvii} The WED Project also incorporates a particular Black worker-centered approach in the training that prepares Black workers to not only get a job, but also become politically educated and engaged workers and union members.

Project Outcomes

The WED Project had a clear action plan designed to ensure success. Figure 5 shows the overall project goals laid out by the Coalition. Majority of the goals have been met, and the ongoing goal that has only partially been met is identifying vacancies within DPW. While vacancies and classifications have been identified on an ongoing basis, meeting the goal fully has proven challenging amid an ever-changing City budget and political landscape. But significant progress has been made toward this goal as the Coalition and the City of Los Angeles are still working in partnership to proactively identify vacancies and job classifications.

FIGURE 5: Two-Year Project Goals & Progress






PROJECT GOALS	PROGRESS
Build a formal working coalition consisting of WERC, the LA Department of Public Works, the City of LA Workforce Development Board, LABWC, LA Fed, SEIU 721, and AFSCME DC 36	
Create policy through the City Council and Board of Public Works that establish pre-employment, employment, and career advancement pathways.	
Identify vacancies, green job classifications, and promotion opportunities within DPW.	
Provide a training program for job seekers and incumbent workers that prepares new trainees for civil service employment, as well as green jobs and promotion opportunities within DPW.	
Work with DPW department managers to determine diversity and inclusion strategies that will ensure racial equity in targeted classifications.	



FIGURE 6: Job Retention Outcomes

80% job retention rate
for those who accepted job offers.

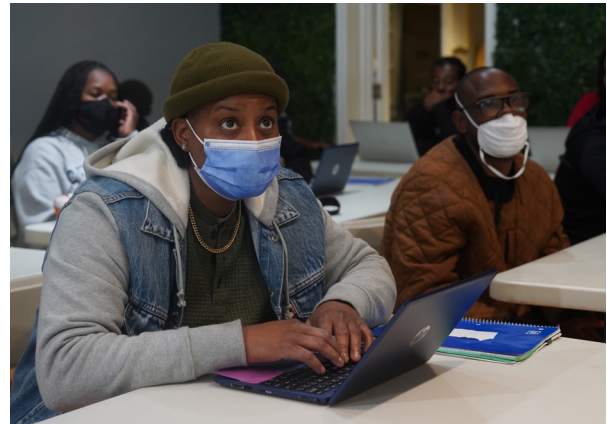
Those who have are on track to reach the 1 year employment mark by the release of this report.

Overall, the WED project has excelled at convening community, worker, union, and City partners to begin to resolve the Black jobs crisis in the City of Los Angeles. Ultimately, of those hired in the first two cohorts, 80% have or are on track to make it to the one-year mark and receive full job appointments. This job retention rate is on par with industry standards,^{xviii} impressive considering this is a new demonstration project focused on workers and systemic racism. Figure 7 breaks down the demographics and outcomes of the first two cohorts in greater detail.

FIGURE 7: Cohort 1 and 2 Profiles

 COHORT 1: OCT 2022—NOV 2022	 COHORT 2: APRIL 2023—MAY 2023
<p>31 PARTICIPANTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 men • 5 women • 8 high school graduates • 10 completed some college • 13 college graduates 	<p>14 PARTICIPANTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 women • 1 non-binary person • 7 high school graduates • 6 completed some college • 1 college graduate
<p>45 Total WED R2W Graduates</p>	
<p>OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 provisional offer letters provided by the City at start of Bootcamp • 24 hired by the City upon completion of program <p>80% job retention rate after 1 year</p>	<p>OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 provisional offer letters provided by the City at start of Bootcamp • 7 hired by the City over the 6 months after completion of the Bootcamp <p>On track for a 85% job retention rate after 1 year¹</p>

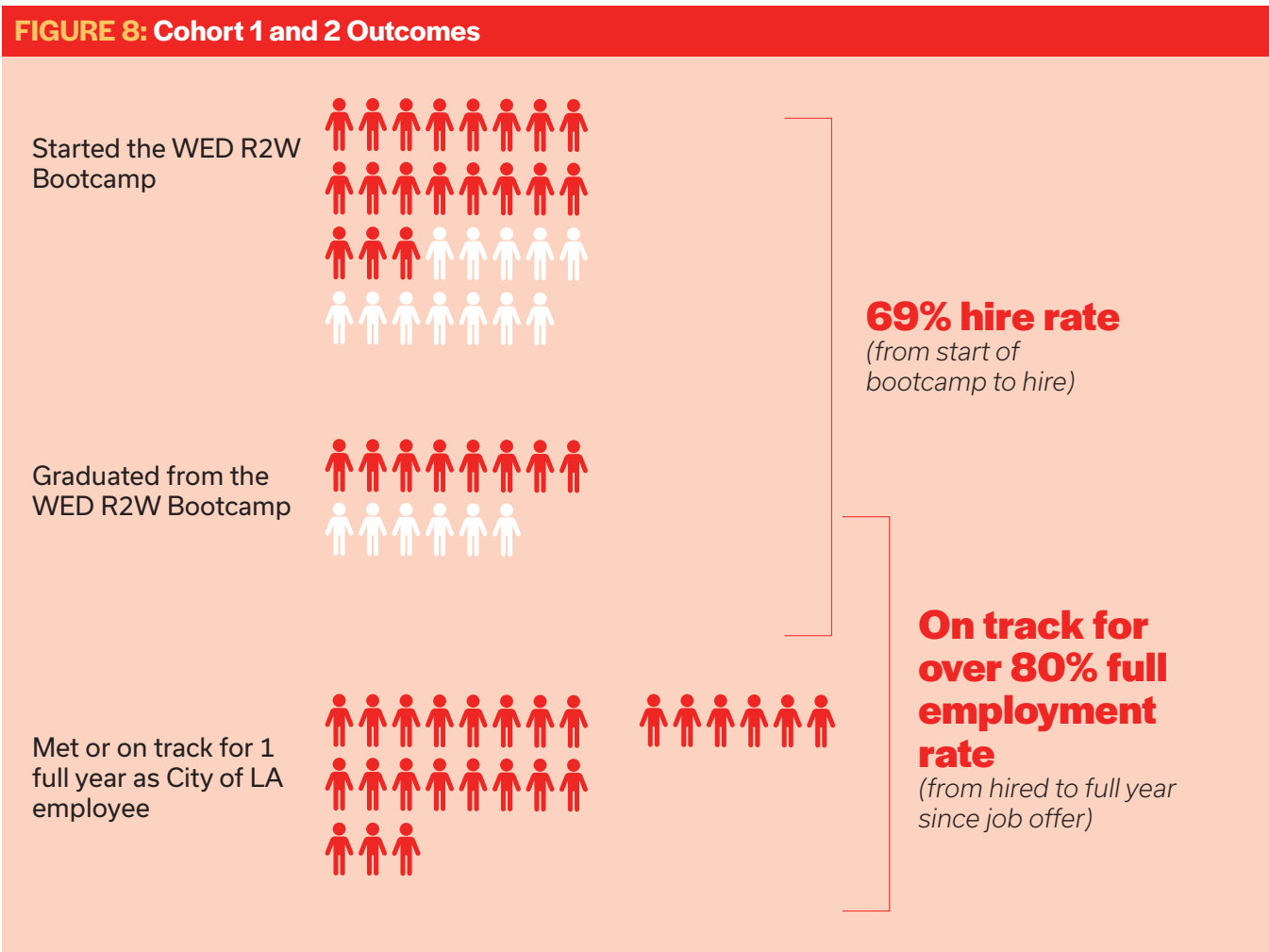
Cohort 1 started the Bootcamp with provisional offer letters from the Bureau. Of the graduates, 24 graduates were offered full-time work by the City's Bureau of Sanitation as vocational workers, and 23 accepted that offer. The one graduate who did not accept that offer chose to pursue another full-time job opportunity with a different organization. Of those who started as vocational workers, 19 have now been promoted to maintenance laborers after a year of employment. Of those who did not complete the full year, two were injured on the job and took time off to recover and two left due to experiences of discrimination on the job. Overall, from those who started with Cohort 1 to those who received a full job appointment, Cohort 1 had a 61% full employment rate.



Unfortunately, due to City bureaucratic delays, Cohort 2 did not have the same experience as there were not positions available for hire upon start of the Bootcamp. They instead were offered positions as they became available up to a year after the completion of the Bootcamp. Six of the graduates were eventually offered positions as vocational workers in the City's Bureau of Sanitation and 1 in Engineering within six months

¹Due to the City of LA's delay in hiring, no participants have reached the year mark to receive a full appointment yet.

of completing the program. Of those offered the vocational worker position, one chose to pursue another full-time job opportunity with a different organization. The other 8 graduates continued to get support from LABWC's R2W team to secure full-time employment.



Since the writing of this report, two graduates passed the civil service exam and now qualify for additional job classifications.

WED as a Standard for Workforce Development

WED is a full employment model, which is a workforce standard, but it is also a model that leverages the strengths of a Black Worker Center model for workforce development. This model does more than just train workers impacted by the Black jobs crisis and provide job placement, but also supports personal development and the development of the Black community and the Black worker justice movement. The evaluation of the program contextualizes the experience of participants from the first two cohorts, demonstrating just this.

The evaluation illuminated important insights from cohort participants, WED Project staff, union leaders, and CARE at Work. The findings of the evaluation are that 1) the main strength of the WED Project for participants was the tailoring of the program to their identities, 2) WED Project succeeds as a full employment model that lays the groundwork for solving the Black jobs crisis, and 3) the strategic partnerships of the Coalition and the City are foundational to the Project's success.

Tailoring to Identity

Black workers expressed that the explicit focus on Black workers was a huge value-add to the process from outreach to placement. Specific features of this program were identified as particularly useful to participants in enhancing their careers:

- **Advertising programs to Black individuals.** By explicitly advertising to Black individuals, the LABWC WED Project garnered high interest. After the first outreach event, LABWC received interest from 200 Black workers, many of whom became participants in the first two cohorts. During listening sessions and one-on-one interviews, participants highlighted that the program was initially appealing to them for its focus on Black individuals; many shared experiences of still being excluded in programs more broadly focused on people of color. In addition, participants noted that they learned about the program through word of mouth from individuals in their social networks. This feedback illuminates the value of using a targeted marketing strategy to reach the target population and demonstrates that individuals in this population are seeking opportunities to pursue public sector jobs.
- **Focusing on underrepresented groups.** In the first cohort, the majority of participants were male-identifying. To promote gender equity for individuals who complete the program and enter the public sector workforce, the second cohort was limited to femme-identifying and gender-expansive individuals. While not covered in this study, other cohorts have focused on young Black workers, Black LGBTQ+ Workers instead of LGBTQ+ Black Workers, and more. The ability to focus simultaneously on participants' racial identity and other intersecting identities was cited as a reason that participants in the second cohort felt comfortable and part of a larger community.
- **Identifying goals during the program.** Participants emphasized the value of the workshops provided by the WED Project. Facilitators led technical skills workshops and professional development programs on topics like goal setting. As a result, participants could articulate their goals, including completion of the program, acquiring retirement benefits, and achieving other professional benchmarks. Participants were also able to connect these goals to other aspects of their identities as parents, caregivers, or even community members. Goal identification is an important tool for maintaining engagement in the program and it demonstrates that the WED Project prioritizes the personal growth of each cohort member.

Foundational to Solving the Black Jobs Crisis

The WED Project curriculum has been designed to provide a foundation for long-term personal and professional success for participants through technical training and community building. The current Black job crisis underlies several negative long-term consequences, including gentrification, a decrease in Black workers in jobs, and a decrease of Black individuals living in Los Angeles. The structure of the WED Project directly addresses these threats to Black individuals by providing cohort participants with professional development resources and workshops to increase preparedness for jobs in the public sector.

Specifically, experts in various public sector roles taught training sessions that enabled participants to obtain certifications for the Class C license and HAZWOPER. Participants also learned soft skills that can be extended to non-public sector jobs. Access to these resources and certifications at no-cost have the potential to make a positive impact on working and living conditions for Black individuals in LA by equipping them with skills to succeed in various public sector jobs. This is particularly notable given that many participants noted difficulties with finding stable, consistent work prior to joining the WED Program. Participants leave this program with not only the skills needed to succeed and obtain quality employment, but also a community to return to in good times and times of crisis.

- **Training promotes positive shifts in working conditions.** Many participants noted that prior to beginning the WED Project, they were unable to find consistent work that provided a livable wage. This data from the listening sessions aligns with alarming employment rates for Black individuals in California. During the 2020 pandemic year, nearly 85% of Black workers in California applied for unemployment benefits, and a previous study of Black workers in Southern California found that many Black workers were still looking for work a year later in 2021.^{xix} Many Black workers are still aiming to financially recover from the pandemic. Participants receiving a stipend for their participation is more important in this program which allows them to take time off from work or receive income if they were unemployed during the program. Furthermore, with a 80% job retention rate for those placed with the City supports further financial stability.
- **The WED Project addresses the job crisis in various ways.** One participant who completed the WED Program and accepted a position described the life-changing benefits of the WED Program. In the participant's previous job, there were limited opportunities for upward mobility which led to barriers in increasing salary. Enrolling in the WED Project and ultimately accepting a position allowed this individual to move back to Los Angeles due to the increase in salary and security from benefits and clear promotion path. Another participant, born and raised in Los Angeles, specifically raised that this program is what will allow them to stay, and hopefully grow old, in Los Angeles.



Strategic Partnerships for Longevity and Sustainability

Strong strategic partnerships not only are the bedrock for this project, but also directly improves participant experience and program longevity. The novelty of the WED Project and its collaborative nature has yielded numerous positive outcomes while allowing room for continued improvement.

- **LABWC has facilitated local partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of the WED Project to prospective Black workers in the public sector.** The formation of these partnerships took years of relationship building and has had beneficial effects on upcoming cohorts, including streamlined onboarding for new workers, overall problem-solving, and shared knowledge on best practices for improving work status and conditions for Black workers. All parties at the table have, at some point, played a key role in streamlining crucial processes or quickly solving challenges for the participants at large. This also played a role in participant experience as participants noted overwhelmingly positive interactions with all speakers and teachers, who shared a unified framing of the program and provided encouragement. While not covered in this report, these WED project partners are currently collaborating to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the program amid budget deficits.
- **The Department of Public Works commitment has played a key role in the success of the project.** Particularly in its capacity as the only City of LA department with an MOU with LABWC to hire 200 WED graduates, the DPW offers an obvious key to the success of a full employment model. Programs like this—with community, union, and employer (City of LA) input—only work as a full employment model when participants are fully hired at the end. Thus, DPW's commitment to this project and facilitation of navigating City of LA hiring processes, with the support of union leaders, is crucial to the longevity and success of the WED Project.



From Demonstration to Permanent Program — Recommendations

Leveraging insights from the listening sessions, follow-up interviews, and meetings with stakeholders, we provide the following summary of strengths and recommendations for the program's continued success and transition from a demonstration project to a permanent program.

Deeper Partnership and Commitment from the City of LA

- **Further facilitate local partnerships to enhance the reach of the WED Project to prospective Black workers in the public sector.** The WED Project can benefit from partnerships within all City of LA departments, and their respective labor unions. Prompt formation of these partnerships can ensure that cohort members are hired upon completion of the program and that they receive full employee status within the year of hiring.
- **Broaden the available divisions for hiring within the DPW.** Expansion should include additional bureaus within the Department of Public Works, drawing on existing relationships. Broadening this scope can also help meet the hiring needs of other departments during a budget deficit that has led to a limited hiring mandate, for which the WED Project is one of three recommended pathway programs for any hiring.

Ensure Program Promotes Occupational Desegregation

- **Expand the classifications and ensure career ladders for all hired WED participants.** While the program has had relative success, the positions that the City has made available to WED participants are all entry level, which does not address the occupational segregation that exists in all sectors, including the public sector.
- **Through this expansion, work against occupational segregation.** Black workers represent the largest demographic of two roles with the lowest salaries: administrative support and service/maintenance workers within the City of LA. These statistics mirror racial disparities in hiring but not promoting Black workers due to underlying and system racist practices.^{xx} This is an opportunity for the City of LA to ensure retention and promotion of Black workers in a variety of roles. It's crucial that the City of LA, in collaboration with LABWC, develop and promote clear career pathways for promotion for WED participants to ensure long-term employment while promoting occupational desegregation.
- **Remove civil service exam requirements that put limitations on the scalability of the WED Project.** The civil service exam requirement caps the WED pathway to City jobs at the maintenance worker/entry level, which effectively promotes occupational segregation. Civil service exams continue to pose a barrier for Black workers aiming to secure public sector employment, as they preclude WED participants from being placed into vacant non-entry level job classifications. If the City of Los Angeles is truly committed to addressing the Black jobs crisis, placement into midlevel jobs is just as crucial as entry-level jobs.



The City of Los Angeles has the chance to be a nationwide leader by addressing racial inequity in its own hiring practices, following the lead of the highest level of governance. There is a clear opportunity for the 1000 Strong Coalition and the City of LA to take the lead in sharing best practices for improving working conditions for Black workers within the larger SoCal and even nationally. For example, feedback from the WED Project may provide insightful information for local governments in Southern California looking to develop and facilitate similar programs with the Inland Empire Black Worker Center and the San Diego Black Worker Center. The WED Project also offers a valuable model for programs with similar goals nationwide.

The WED Project upholds the public sector's responsibility to Black workers and has proven itself in creating a new standard for a public sector full employment workforce development model that will play a crucial role in solving the Black jobs crisis for good.

Research Methods

The study used a mixed methods research justice model and centered the experiences and expertise of the organizations involved in the project. In line with best practices for workforce development program evaluation, we aimed to examine the following: 1) What is working for participants, and what can be improved, 2) What has the program (and its participants) accomplished, and 3) What "effective practices for replication" can be identified.^{xxi} We also used a process evaluation approach, wherein interventions and programs are judged in context to the implementation process, allowing for the outcome evaluation to include nuance.^{xxii}

To meet the goals of the case study, researchers from CARE at Work attended early planning meetings, completed a literature review of relevant programs, and conducted focus groups (listening sessions) and semi-structured 1-1 interviews with participants, as well as data workshops with program staff and stakeholders. The anchor partners were involved in the design, fielding, analysis, and dissemination plan.

1. The first phase of the project focused on defining the parameters and narrowing the scope of the research from the convening of the 1000 Strong Coalition leaders. This included facilitated discussion to understand the program and the evaluation needs of the project. This phase also included documents and other literature reviews to better orient the researchers.
2. The second phase of the project the research team reviewed and synthesized the information gathered from the coalition meetings and available demographic data of City of LA employees, and conducted focus groups with Black City of LA retirees to develop, inform, and contextualize research objectives, evaluation metrics, and workplan.
3. In the third phase of the project, the research team conducted a literature review with relevant case studies on similar programs and developed and implemented listening session guides for the first two cohorts of the program.
4. The fourth phase consisted of the research team analyzing listening session data, gathering quantitative data collected on the program by the City of LA, and running basic quantitative analysis on 2022 5-Year American Community Survey Los Angeles Black worker data.
5. The final phase of the research involved concluding analysis on listening session and interview data and reconvening 1000 Strong Coalition for a virtual gallery walk reviewing all the data collected over the course of the project. This phase allowed us to further refine the emerging evaluation deliverable within the context of the 1000 Strong Campaign.

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