

## Thesis Statement:

To close the prime-age unemployment gap and increase median wages in the five-census tract of Chattanooga, we envision:

- building a **hyper-local workforce development system** to provide **recruiting and job placement services** for individuals in the five-census tract area
- **bolstering the effectiveness of the American Job Centers** and connecting community members to **existing social services**
- **filling the social service gaps in child care and transportation**
- **increasing access to, and piloting new, innovative workforce development and education programs with resources** like Pay It Forward, Tennessee Reconnect, Viable Pathways, BuildWithin Apprenticeships, and more.

## Introduction & Progress:

Chattanooga is poised to capitalize on this unprecedented investment from the EDA to build a cohesive, collaborative, and effective workforce development system that will meet the needs of both workers and employers, with a clear focus on job quality and inclusive economic development. The EDA's investment – combined with the commitments from key local partners – will allow us to leverage and align existing workforce development resources to connect prime-age residents with thriving-wage jobs and ensure access to high quality training opportunities and wraparound resources.

With the support of EDA's Strategy Development Grant, a cross-sector team of representatives from the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, Chattanooga 2.0, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, The Bethlehem Center, and the Benwood Foundation, has met with workforce development subject-matter experts to inform our approach to Recompete, including Accelerator for America, The New Localism Associates, Jobs for The Future, KentuckianaWorks, Social Finance, and more. These conversations provided us with research and proven approaches to building an effective workforce system.

In commitment to establishing a long-term co-investing strategy for the City of Chattanooga, we have engaged The New Localism Associates to begin initial scanning for a full Investment Playbook. This work will ensure that Chattanooga continues to make strategic investments in underserved communities long after Recompete ends.

Based on this extensive research and an understanding of the local assets and partners that can be better leveraged to improve workforce outcomes, Chattanooga's Recompete Proposal has three overarching goals:

- Move 2,000 prime age residents into quality jobs with a wage of \$20/hr with benefits or more - through effective workforce pathways that include apprenticeships, learn & earn models, and postsecondary certification/degree programs over 5 years
- Demonstrate models for addressing barriers related to childcare, transportation, and other challenges – resulting in increased seats and use of public transportation

- Build a Workforce Systems Governance model that promotes equitable access to quality jobs, effectively meets the needs of employers, has sustainable and innovative funding models and can be scaled across the community.

To reach these goals, we will establish a clear governance system to monitor the progress of each project, strengthen community partnerships, conduct asset mapping, oversee the development of an Investment Playbook for the City of Chattanooga, and ensure that these communities are represented in the work of the regional Workforce Development Board.

Ultimately, this system will serve as a pilot for both Chattanooga and Hamilton County, and we plan to use the five-year grant period to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing Workforce Development Board, implement incremental positive changes to the existing system based on the lessons we learn throughout Reconnect, and build the case for establishing and funding a new local workforce development entity to work in conjunction with the Workforce Development Board, and expanding the Reconnect model to serve all of Chattanooga and Hamilton County.

Our proposal includes four interrelated projects:

- 1) Career Navigators and Talent Hubs
  - a. Establishing Talent Hubs
  - b. Career Navigators
  - c. Wraparound Specialists
  - d. Employer Partnerships
    - i. Viable Pathways and Apprenticeships
    - ii. Occupational Analysis and Crosswalks
    - iii. Management and Frontline Supervisor Training
- 2) Childcare and Our Economic Future
  - a. Business-Based Childcare Micro-Centers
  - b. Home-Based Childcare Micro-Centers for Entrepreneurs
  - c. Early Learning Scholarships
- 3) Improving Public Transit
- 4) Governance and Systems Building
  - a. Managing Reconnect Projects and Staffing
  - b. Workforce Board Participation & Community Partnerships
  - c. Strategic Employer Engagement
  - d. Training and Education Fund
  - e. Comprehensive Training for Workforce Development Professionals
  - f. Investment Playbook & Asset Mapping

### Chattanooga Context:

To further guide this project, we compared the top four industries of employment in our five census tracts with the largest industries in Chattanooga, the top occupations employers have hired for over the past twelve months, and the wages and skill requirements for each of those occupations. With this information we've established initial "Priority Pathways" with anticipated training programs.

### Career Navigators and Talent Hubs:

#### Bolster Effectiveness of American Job Centers Through Talent Hubs:

A key aspect of our approach to increasing job opportunities for residents in South Chattanooga is improving the overall accessibility and customer experience for residents seeking job search and coaching support.

This local system will be physically located in two Community Centers that sit within our five-census tract area. The City of Chattanooga has committed to revitalizing and rebranding these two Community Centers as Talent Hubs to provide a single front door for effective job and training access. Through co-locating community organizations, Talent Hubs will serve as the access point to training/education scholarships, career coaching and job placement services, and wraparound support services.

Talent Hubs will include shared office space for community partners and training providers, which will be coordinated through a Master Community Calendar. Partners will have regular office hours in each Talent Hub and a Universal Intake Form will be created for Navigators to efficiently connect residents to services.

Staff at the Talent Hubs will schedule and coordinate regular training sessions and service events at the Talent Hubs in partnership with local organizations.

The Talent Hub Team will be a part of the Economic and Workforce Development Team at the City of Chattanooga and will report directly to the Recompete Coordinator.

#### Building Access to Workforce Training Solutions and Careers:

Two Career Navigators will be hired to provide various services out of the Talent Hubs. The Career Navigators will work directly with South Chattanooga residents to determine their interests and aptitude for various jobs. The Navigators will work with residents through the job search process, assist with resume building and completing applications, conduct interview preparation sessions, and continue to provide career coaching through the first two years of employment.



## Strengthening The Social Services Ecosystem with Wraparound Specialists:

To further support individuals as they pursue employment, Wraparound Specialists will serve as subject-matter experts in WIOA, TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Programs, Childcare Certificates, Housing Choice Vouchers, and more, to improve customer experience in accessing these services.

These Specialists will work closely with staff in the American Job Centers to ensure participants are accessing all available federal workforce funding to support their training endeavors.

Both the Childcare Project and Public Transportation Project will be uniquely tailored to serve the individuals within the Recompete Area, and the Wraparound Specialists will be equipped to connect individuals to these programs after exhausting available existing public service programming resources.

## Employer Partnerships:

Career Navigators will be working closely with local employers to fill their staffing needs. Through the planning process, we have secured six employer partnerships and we are adapting our approach and building out a clear sales pitch for the Recompete Projects Manager and Career Navigators to increase employer partnerships throughout the grant work.

To successfully connect residents to careers, we are building out a menu of partnership options for employers along with the associated benefits of these partnerships. Partnership options include:



In order to provide valuable support to local employers, The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, The City of Chattanooga, Chattanooga 2.0, and BuildWithin will each volunteer one staff person to become fully trained in the DACUM process through Ohio State University. A focus will be placed on building a system of career pathways within targeted industries to increase retention rates across employers in our community. Additionally, staff will work with employers to develop occupational crosswalks to clearly outline the path from an entry-level role into a skilled position, increasing the economic mobility of our participants.

This training will allow our partners to provide a valuable service to employers and improve retention across the community. Occupational Analysis and Internal Career Development Mapping will strengthen the operations of our local companies and build out clear pipelines for individuals to see a way to develop within a company.

### **Childcare and Our Economic Future:**

Individuals pursuing career opportunities will have access to the Childcare and Transportation Benefits through Recompete, and those benefits will be scaffolded with more intensive services available during the first 90 days of employment and tapering off as individuals become financially independent. By offering this support, individuals will be incentivized to accept increased wages without fear of losing these essential services.

Often, child care is a significant barrier for individuals seeking employment. Any additional income may jeopardize a household's eligibility for support services, which is why we are proposing Early Learning Scholarships for individuals within the eligible area. By providing these scholarships, we will be able to significantly increase the prime-age employment rate.

Childcare Micro-Centers will be established in partnership with local employers and while priority will be given to Recompete participants, we recognize that all additional childcare seats added in our county ultimately benefit those living within the eligible area.

### **Improving Public Transit:**

Improving public transportation access and effectiveness is another pillar of our approach to removing barriers to work for the communities of South Chattanooga. In partnership with CARTA, we plan to develop direct routes to education partners and various employers with similar shift schedules, expand a pilot program of micro-transit solutions, and conduct a mobility study of the Chattanooga area.

Through Recompete, CARTA will reintroduce the High Frequency Route to Chattanooga State Community College in support of our efforts to increase the usage of benefits like Tennessee Recompete within these five census tracts.

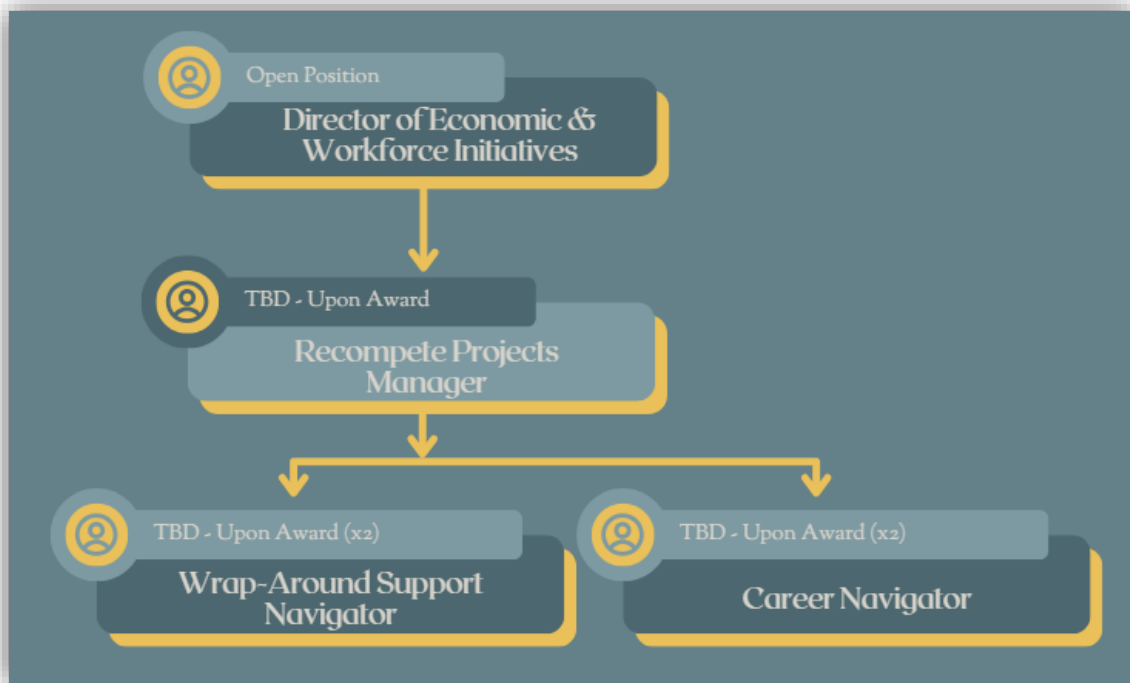
These components will be critical to our Recompete work in that these services will solve immediate workforce barriers for individuals and will build the case for local government and employers to see the economic impact of engaging these communities in the workforce.

## **Governance and Systems Building:**

### **Managing Recompete Projects and Staffing:**

To streamline the governance structure for the duration of Recompete, The City of Chattanooga will serve as the lead applicant for each of our four projects. This will also ensure sufficient grant management support is available for each project. Five positions will be added to the Department of Economic Development to oversee and manage the Recompete work, reporting to the Director of Economic and Workforce Initiatives.

The following positions will be necessary:



Additionally, a Recompete Advisory Committee will be created to ensure Chattanooga and Hamilton County continue to prioritize building and investing in an improved and collaborative workforce system for our communities. The committee will include representation from the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, Benwood Foundation, Local Workforce Development Board, and employer partners. This Committee will monitor the progress of all Recompete Projects, regularly evaluate KPIs and reporting metrics, and establish plans for future workforce efforts.

Organizations committed to supporting Recompete efforts through existing staff:

- 1) Chattanooga 2.0
  - a. Director Of Viable Pathways
    - i. Developing Career Pathways in partnership with employers and local educational institutions
    - ii. Providing support to American Job Centers in WIOA enrollment services

- iii. Conducting Occupational Analysis and Internal Career Mapping Services
- 2) BuildWithin
  - a. Director of Apprenticeship Programming
    - i. Developing Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
    - ii. Conducting Occupational Analysis and Internal Career Mapping Services
- 3) The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce
  - a. Director of Talent Development
    - i. Direct/regular employer outreach and engagement
    - ii. Conducting Occupational Analysis and Internal Career Mapping Services

This structure, along with significant community support, will allow the Career and Wraparound Navigators to focus on job placement and wraparound services while also establishing a roadmap for improving the workforce system in the future.

#### Workforce Board Participation and Community Partnerships:

Currently, our city mayor serves on the Tennessee State Workforce Board and our county mayor is the Chief Local Elected Official for the Southeast Tennessee Regional Workforce Development Board. This provides us with a unique ability to align workforce development efforts at the state and local level.

Both the Recompete Coordinator and the Senior Advisor for Economic and Workforce Initiatives will serve on the Regional Workforce Board to ensure our communities are represented in the regional workforce efforts.

To increase local employer voice at the Workforce Board, the Recompete Coordinator will oversee an advisory board of local employers and training solutions providers, collecting employer feedback on current and future workforce needs. The Coordinator will ensure this feedback is shared at the Regional Workforce Board Meetings and that the efforts of the regional board aim to address our local concerns.

In addition to our alignment efforts with the local workforce board, The Department of Economic and Workforce Development will continue work closely with the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, which serves as the local Economic Development Organization for both Hamilton County and the City of Chattanooga. The Chamber of Commerce will continue their work of executing on the Strategic Plan for Economic Growth in our area, which will also serve as a roadmap for the Recompete Coordinator in establishing “Priority Career Paths” – or jobs with thriving wages and benefits, immediate entry opportunities, and predicted significant or steady growth.

The Recompete Coordinator will prioritize working with the local Workforce Board to provide both support and clear guidance for incremental changes within our local workforce system that will increase transparency with all stakeholders and improve the effectiveness of federal funding. We anticipate this will include guidance on developing a streamlined process for employers to participate in on-the-job training, apprenticeship, or incumbent worker training programs and support in marketing the availability, and existence of, these funding sources.

### Strategic Employer Engagement:

The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce will lead the direct employer engagement by:

- Conducting regular existing business visits, sharing employer feedback with Recompete Coordinator, Director of Viable Pathways, and Director of Apprenticeship Programming
- Identifying employer partners for Viable Pathways and Registered Apprenticeships
- Directing employers to Career Navigators for their staffing needs
- Establishing standing committees of community members, leaders, and employers to identify service gaps

### Training and Education Fund:

In alignment with local workforce demand, we plan to establish a career impact bond program in partnership with Social Finance. This program will create clear incentives for training providers to develop programs that respond to local employer demand and prepare individuals for high-wage occupations. Currently, local training providers have no road map that requires programs to be aligned with the local job market and individuals are expected to conduct their own research and due diligence to determine what program will lead to a good job.

[Pay It Forward](#) offers “place-based workforce funds that more sustainably invest in worker upskilling. They amplify the impact of public and philanthropic dollars by recycling funds to ‘pay it forward’ for future learners.” This model of financing for training and education programs will support individuals who do not qualify for existing workforce training funds.

Additionally, Social Finance will conduct an industry analysis to summarize workforce composition and trends, and sector industry growth projections to align training programs with high-wage and in-demand occupations.

### Comprehensive Training for Workforce Development Professionals:

As we have discovered, our problems lie often not in lack of services, but in a lack of coordination and knowledge of services across organizations. With this in mind, The City of Chattanooga will provide training for all partner organizations to align service delivery and quality of service.

During the first year of Recompete, we will conduct a Certified Workforce Development Professional Workshop in partnership with UTC for all workforce development practitioners at partner organizations. Our goal is for each partner organization to have at least one CWDP on staff and UTC will host annual workshops to ensure we stay at that target. The City of Chattanooga, Chamber of Commerce, and UTC will host quarterly professional development events for partner organizations featuring national practitioners, highlighting community programs, and networking between professionals.

For Wraparound Navigators and similar roles, we recognize quality professional development will be required to build capacity across organizations. For this reason, we will align training for professionals providing wraparound or social services. The City of Chattanooga, United Way, and UTC will host quarterly professional development events for partner organizations featuring



national practitioners, highlighting community programs and facilitating networking between professionals.

### Investment Playbook and Asset Mapping:

Although Chattanooga has a long history of strong public-private partnerships, we are missing a guide to expand those partnerships into a unified system with shared goals and objectives. According to Bruce Katz, “Investment playbooks are a new and effective tool to organize assets, build stakeholder consensus and align investment.” An Investment Playbook will guide our community long after Reconnect as we continue to “leverage investments to build a larger ecosystem in a coordinated approach where funding streams add up to be greater than the sum of their parts.”

This Investment Playbook will:

- Identify funding requirements to expand existing Reconnect workforce services
- Create a comprehensive map to long-term economic growth through prioritized projects that will build an ecosystem of talent, capital, and infrastructure
- Establish a forward-thinking investment mindset across philanthropy, private institutions, and government entities
- “Develop an operating paradigm for equitable economic development and demonstrate how to bring it to fruition, focusing on the configuration of private, public, and civic capital.”

Our goal through Reconnect is to close the prime-age employment gap in Chattanooga, and to create a system that will ultimately create clear pathways for future generations to enter the workforce. An Investment Playbook will ensure that current and future leaders are equipped to make strategic decisions aligned with long-term vision for equitable economic development.

Additionally, we know that Chattanooga and Hamilton County have impressive local and state resources available for workforce development and wrap-around services, but no comprehensive map exists to capitalize on existing resources. A comprehensive and digital Asset and Workforce Ecosystem database will provide Career Navigators, Wraparound Service Navigators, and similar roles within community organizations with an effective tool to identify funding sources, training programs, and guidance on how to access funding for local communities.

### Conclusion

The City of Chattanooga is eager to continue the work of long-term and equitable economic growth that will strengthen our existing assets and increase opportunities for economic mobility for Chattanoogans across all our communities. Reconnect has provided our city with the opportunity to dream big and to take stock of the myriad of organizations, programs, and individuals that set Chattanooga apart from other cities. This opportunity will allow us to build a system that removes economic barriers to build a stronger Chattanooga.