

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Decatur, Illinois is poised at an inflection point of transformative economic renewal, with 4,000+ manufacturing and other well-paying new jobs expected within the MSA and in neighboring areas over the next 3 years.<sup>1</sup> Our proposed project, **Workforce Opportunities for Resilient Communities (“WORC”)**, requests \$47M in EDA funding to harness the collective power of community, innovation, and resilience to reshape the future of its workforce through sustainable growth in America’s heartland. Led by Richland Community College and supported by innovative local employers, public schools, community-based organizations, non-profits, and government, WORC has three primary objectives that collectively address the key inhibitors causing systemic Black unemployment in Decatur’s Urban Core (our service area<sup>2</sup>, which comprises 60% of Decatur’s Black population):

1. Understand opportunity of well-paying jobs in key established and emerging industries and share with schools, colleges, employers, and community partners.
2. Enable employment of 2,400 residents through skills-based training and direct employment opportunities
3. Sustain employment by providing direct support and resources to 8,000-9,000 residents, using methods proven to help residents get employed and stay employed.

Together, **these objectives will decrease the prime age employment gap (PAEG) by 6pp across the Decatur MSA and 14-20pp<sup>3</sup> within the service area, in addition to helping 31% of employed prime-age residents keep their jobs.** Federal Recompete funding is essential to embed equity at the heart of expected job growth and address the root causes of unemployment, ensuring that the forthcoming opportunities foster substantial and lasting generational advancements for all community members, particularly historically underserved Black residents.

**OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY**

Current challenge: Decatur faces a critical prime-age employment gap vs. the United States today, which is particularly severe among its Black residents, highlighting an urgent need for intervention. The plan’s service area qualifies as “persistently distressed” with a PAEG of 17pp among its ~8K prime-age residents and a Black unemployment rate of 24% (unemployment among Black residents has exceeded 20% for the last 15+ years).

Metric <sup>4</sup>	US	Decatur MSA	Service area
Employment-to-population ratio, prime-age (PAEG)	78%	75% (-3pp vs. US)	61% (-17pp)
Unemployment rate, prime-age	5%	8%	13%
Black employment-to-pop. ratio, all adults (PAEG)	57%	47% (-10pp)	44% (-13pp)
Black unemployment rate, all adults	9%	19%	24%
Attended college, all adults	74%	60%	45%

Black unemployment in Decatur stems from a lack of clear non-college pathways to jobs, a legacy of school segregation, recent deindustrialization, and lack of access and awareness of well-paying jobs. Decades of plant closures—notably Borg Warner in the 1980s (~2,500 people),

<sup>1</sup> Lightcast, 2022

<sup>2</sup> Service area comprises 11 census tracts with the highest PAEG and contiguous tracts with similar educational and demographic profiles

<sup>3</sup> Assumes that 50-70% of participants in EnRich 2.0 and Workforce Academy live in the service area

<sup>4</sup> 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

Bridgestone/Firestone in 2001 (~1,400 people), and Akorn in 2023 (~400)—have coincided with “white flight” from the City to the County’s six outlying school districts. Decatur Public School (DPS) District 61, encompassing the Urban Core service area and most of Decatur’s Black residents, lost 38% of its white student body from 2004-2019. This district, now 63% non-white, borders districts such as Mt. Zion District 3 (5% non-white), Meridian District 15 (3% non-white), and Warrensburg-Latham District 11 (8% non-white). DPS students, 60%+ of whom do not attend college, are increasingly underserved, with \$1,500-3,000 less in revenue per pupil than the county’s other districts,<sup>5</sup> leading to long-term PAEG within the Black population.

The opportunity: Despite these challenges, Decatur is reaching a critical inflection point: manufacturing is anticipated to add 4,000 jobs in the MSA by 2027 (6% growth), offering pathways for sustained well-paying jobs. A large portion of expected regional growth is expected due to the electric vehicle manufacturing and precision fermentation sectors. *Electric vehicle manufacturing* involves the production of electric cars, batteries, and related components. There is a strong opportunity to leverage partners like TCCI, an EV component manufacturer, and Rivian, an EV car company, both of whom support this project and are committed to hiring EnRich participants. *Precision fermentation* utilizes microorganisms to produce complex organic molecules like proteins and enzymes, which are essential in pharmaceuticals, food production, and biofuels. Decatur is already home to two of the largest precision manufacturers—ADM and Primient—so the expansion of this sector in Decatur could leverage local agricultural outputs to create high-value products. ADM currently employs 4,000 people in Decatur, while Primient employs over 600, and both employers are projecting growth. Illinois is also a Phase 2 finalist for EDA Tech Hub for the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Bioprocessing (iFAB) project, which would require an additional 3,000-6,000 workers in the region by 2040.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these emerging sectors, WORC will leverage employer growth in *existing sectors*: advanced manufacturing (18% of current jobs), healthcare & social assistance (14%), retail trade (10%), and education (9%)<sup>7</sup>. Some key employers in manufacturing—the primary focus for WORC—have announced expansion plans recently. Three of our industry partners alone—ADM, Primient, and TCCI—have announced expansion plans representing more than 1,100 jobs. There are two joint ventures with LG Chemicals to produce critical inputs for bioplastics. ADM and InnovaFeed have also partnered to construct the world’s largest insect protein production site in Decatur Illinois, which is expected to create ~250 jobs in Decatur. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker visited the North American Insect Innovation Center in April 2024 and lauded it as a core part of a “growing Illinois business economy that is far from done expanding.”

Existing jobs in Decatur, Illinois		
Company	Sector	Employment
*Archer Daniels Midland	Manufacturing	4,000
*Caterpillar	Manufacturing	3,150
*Decatur Memorial Hospital	Healthcare	2,000
*Decatur Public Schools	Education	1,750
HSHS St. Mary's Hospital	Healthcare	700
*Ameren Illinois	Utilities	630
Millikin University	Education	600
*Primient	Manufacturing	600
*Mueller	Manufacturing	585
The Kelly Group	Manufacturing	575
Bodine Electric	Manufacturing	400
Norfolk Southern	Transportation	380
A-Lert Construction Services	Construction	300
McLeod Express	Transportation	250
Fuyao Glass	Manufacturing	175
TCR Systems	Manufacturing	150
*T/CCI Manufacturing	Manufacturing	125

\*Denotes Recompete project partner or supporter  
Source: EDC of Decatur and Macon County

<sup>5</sup> EdBuild 2020 Faultlines Report

<sup>6</sup> Region includes Macon County (Decatur), Piatt County, and Champaign County (University of IL, IBRL); numbers estimated by BCG during Phase 2 of iFAB Tech Hub application

<sup>7</sup> BCG analysis of Decatur MSA 2021 employment data from Data USA

WORC’s role: Without a coordinated, focused effort, Decatur risks failing to capitalize on the current momentum of job growth in emerging and existing industries, including ensuring that these industries prioritize equitable employment. WORC relies on three objectives to achieve its desired outcomes:

**OBJECTIVE 1: First, Decatur must understand opportunity of well-paying jobs in key established and emerging industries and share with schools, colleges, employers, and community partners.** Precision fermentation and electric vehicle manufacturing are two emerging industries, so understanding the number and types of jobs available today, skills required, and potential for salary growth at each career stage is critical to provide Decatur residents accurate information about the potential of these careers. Even more mature industries in Decatur (e.g., traditional manufacturing, education, and healthcare) have not been mapped. By understanding job availability, required skills, and salary growth potential, Decatur can better inform its residents about career opportunities. Without this, residents may miss out on suitable career paths, and employers may struggle to fill job vacancies.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Next, Decatur must enable employment and prepare residents for these jobs through skills-based training and direct employment opportunities.** 77% of Decatur’s available manufacturing jobs do not require a four-year or even two-year degree, but they do demand essential skills, industry-specific training, and/or certifications.<sup>8</sup> Attending training, school, or upskilling courses both costs money and limits a resident’s ability to attend their job, which makes it difficult for both unemployed and underemployed residents to pursue these opportunities. Addressing cost barriers and job schedule conflicts, through flexible skills-based programs with stipends and support services will improve job readiness and long-term career prospects in both new and established sectors.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Finally, Decatur must ensure the prime age employment gap does not increase by providing direct support and resources to residents, using methods proven to help residents get employed and stay employed.** Many residents live paycheck-to-paycheck (18% are below the poverty line, and 40% make below a living wage), so even a single unexpected event can push them into debt or make it difficult to maintain steady employment.<sup>9</sup> This contributes to job insecurity by forcing individuals to make decisions that prioritize immediate financial relief over long-term employment or stability, hindering individual career progression and also contributing to broader economic disparities that can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit economic mobility. Targeted support—childcare, financial assistance, career coaching—can empower residents to remain employed.

The job creation measures outlined in this plan (Objective 2) are important to place residents in jobs, but PAEG can only be reduced if underlying factors contributing to unemployment are addressed concurrently. Therefore, WORC also combats Decatur’s underlying systemic unemployment challenges by understanding the full spectrum of opportunities available in Decatur and supporting residents when they are in their jobs (Objectives 1 and 3).

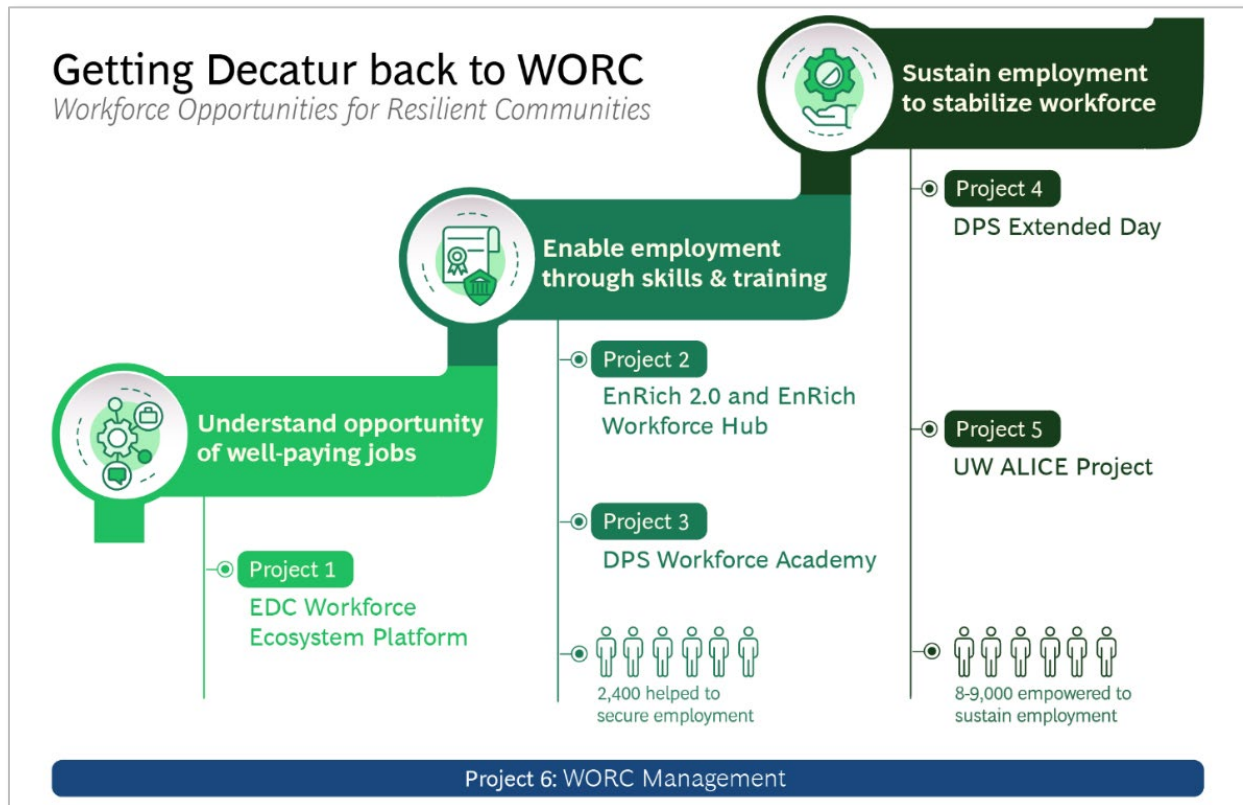
## OVERVIEW OF COMPONENT PROJECTS

Our component projects fit under these three objectives. Where possible, WORC aims to expand and leverage existing programs that already have a track record of proven success in Decatur and

<sup>8</sup> Lightcast, 2022

<sup>9</sup> US Census, 2022

strong relationships with the community and employers, rather than building new initiatives from scratch. **Together, these projects will help 2,400 residents secure employment (7% of the Decatur MSA’s prime-age population) and empower 8-9,000 people to maintain employment (31% of the Decatur MSA’s prime-age employed population).**



**OBJECTIVE 1: Understand opportunity**

- **Project 1 (\$1.7M):** The **Workforce Ecosystem Platform project**, led by the Economic Development Corporation of Decatur-Macon County (“EDC”, Project Partner), will help Decatur’s workforce ecosystem understand job demands and gaps in the labor market, ensure residents understand what career pathways are available, and connect job seekers to employers. It will create a Labor Market Data Center, interactive Quality Career Pathways of six priority sectors, a Job Opening and Exploration Board that ties directly to pathways, and will establish a Workforce Inclusion Council to ensure equity is at the heart of job creation in Decatur. These resources will be used by schools, colleges, employers, local WIOA, and community groups and can be disseminated to residents at any stage of learning or career growth to meet people where they are.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Enable employment**

- **Project 2a (\$18.5M):** Led by Richland Community College (“RCC”, Lead Applicant), **EnRich 2.0** will build on the proven EnRich model, a 10-12 week program that combines essential skills training with industry-specific technical training, all while providing competitive stipends and highly individualized wraparound supports. Since its establishment in 2017, 95% of graduates have retained employment within 1 year of graduation, typically at

30% higher than living wage. Funding for EnRich 2.0 will allow the program to expand to reach an additional ~1,900 participants over the grant period, of which ~1,350 will be Black participants pursuing careers in manufacturing.

- **Project 2b (\$7M):** To accommodate enrollment growth from Project 2a, RCC will construct the **EnRich Workforce Hub**, a dedicated space that accommodates all EnRich participants and provides the training equipment and facilities needed to prepare students for good jobs in mature and emerging industries, including specific facilities for precision fermentation and EV manufacturing. The requested Recompete investment will be combined with \$10M secured investments from RCC and industry partners to purchase, remodel, construct, and equip the 26,000 square foot Workforce Hub, allowing EnRich to scale its program with students and employer partners.
- **Project 3 (\$2M): Workforce Academy** led by Decatur Public Schools (“DPS”, Project Partner) will train 500 at-risk high school seniors over the course of the grant period (~30% of each year’s senior class), focusing on essential skills, career pathways, and employer connections, while providing wraparound supports to program members. The Academy will improve graduation rates, enrollment in training and degree programs, and post-graduation employment in the short term and prime-age employment in the long term.

Project	Participants per year of program					Project total	Total impact
	1	2	3	4	5		
2) EnRich 2.0 & Hub	200	300	400	500	500	1,900	2,400
3) Workforce Academy	100	100	100	100	100	500	

**OBJECTIVE 3: Sustain employment**

- **Project 4 (\$6M): The ALICE Project**, led by United Way of Decatur & Mid-Illinois (“UW”, Project Partner), will help 5,700 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) participants remain employed or transition to living-wage jobs by providing counseling, financial assistance, and coordination with external supports. United Way’s current ALICE program is highly successful: it has helped more than 280 individuals retain employment, with only 1% returning for more assistance.
- **Project 5 (\$10.5M): Decatur Public School’s Extended Day** project will address one of the largest barriers to employment—childcare—by expanding before- and after- school care to meet 100% of need in the district, reducing employment barriers for ~1,400 parents per year (2,500-3,300 over the grant period<sup>10</sup>) and offering expanded learning opportunities for 1,200 children (2,200-2,800 over the grant period). As an added benefit, Extended Day improves outcomes for students who attend, improving long-term potential for sustained employment.

Project	Participants per year					Project total	Total impact
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5		
4) ALICE Project	900	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	5,700	8,000-9,000
5) Extended Day	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	2,500-3,300 <sup>11</sup>	

<sup>10</sup> Assumes the average length of participation in Extended Day for each family is 3-5 years

<sup>11</sup> 1,200 students and ~1,400 parents supported each year. Total refers to # of distinct parents supported and assumes the average length of participation for each family is 3-5 years.



Finally, all component projects will be coordinated by Project 6 (\$1.5M): WORC Management, led by RCC, using project management principles from IFTF, a trusted partner of leading nonprofit, private, and public organizations, to build a model to ensure smooth execution. Together, these projects will not only help Decatur, but can form a lighthouse for other communities to learn from, including neighboring communities of Bloomington and Springfield, where the median income of Black households is 36% of white households. The combination of these projects—addressing underlying contributors to PAEG in addition to providing direct employment opportunities—can be a model for the US.

### DELIVERABLES AND KEY MILESTONES

Each project will have specific deliverables, milestones, and outcomes that they will be tracking and will be reported to the WORC Management team to ensure projects are helping reduce the PAEG in Decatur. For more detail, please see individual project narratives.

Investment	Deliverables	Milestones		
		Year 1	Year 2	Years 3-5
1 Workforce Ecosystem Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Labor Market Data Center</li> <li>✓ Quality Career Pathways</li> <li>✓ Job Opening and Exploration Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Ecosystem Officer hired</li> <li>• Establish Workforce Inclusion Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build key deliverables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share updated LMDC reports every 6-8 months</li> <li>• Use QCPs in EnRich, DPS, and community</li> </ul>
2a EnRich 2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 1,900 additional residents participate in EnRich program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit facilitators, professors, larger class of students, staff</li> <li>• Deliver training to 200 additional students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver training to 300 additional students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale to full capacity of 500 additional students per year</li> </ul>
2b EnRich Workforce Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Standalone EnRich facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete site clearing and demolitions, begin renovations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete renovations, open temporary structures to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Phase 1 construction and open capacity for 500 students</li> </ul>
3 Workforce Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 500 students participate across 5 years, 450 of whom graduate and are employed/ enrolled in continuing education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce specialists hired and wraparound supports committed</li> <li>• Program delivered to 75-125 students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program delivered to ~100 students</li> <li>• Alumni outreach and programming begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program delivered to ~100 students per year</li> <li>• 10 employer partners committed</li> </ul>
4 ALICE Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 5,700 ALICE individuals assisted</li> <li>✓ \$3M in direct support delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff hired and trained</li> <li>• Deliver support services to 900 people per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support delivered to full capacity of 1,200 people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support delivered to 1,200 people per year</li> </ul>
5 Extended Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 1,200 students enrolled per year</li> <li>✓ 1,400 parents served per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional staff hired and trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program scaled to meet 100% of need in district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan defined for post-program funding</li> </ul>
6 WORC Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Leadership Team meets monthly</li> <li>✓ Regular reports on key metrics of WORC initiatives</li> <li>✓ Plan for post-grant sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team, Advisory Board, and Topic Councils assembled</li> <li>• Additional staff hired</li> <li>• Quarterly WORC reports released</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership team meets monthly, Board quarterly</li> <li>• WORC reports generated quarterly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership team meets monthly</li> <li>• WORC reports generated quarterly</li> </ul>

### COMPLEMENTARY INVESTMENT, POLICY, OR OTHER COMMITMENTS

WORC has received strong support from organizations throughout Decatur and the State of Illinois, totaling \$16.5M of monetary commitments and in-kind donations. For a comprehensive list of commitments, please see the *WORC Commitment Letter Index*. High-level examples:

- The City of Decatur
  - *Transportation barriers*: \$5M+ to deploy micro mobility transportation service and fare free Ridership for EnRich and DPS students
  - *Childcare barriers*: \$1M to acquire, rehabilitate, and subsidize a new childcare facility that could address the need of childcare for 0-3 year olds
  - *Understanding of career opportunities*: \$200,000 in cash funding and \$150,000 for in-kind marketing of the Workforce Ecosystem Platform
- The State of Illinois
  - *Complementary funding*:

- \$38M for Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, where Decatur is designated as one of 13 hubs to receive funding
  - \$5M in non-federal, available, unencumbered funds to the EDA Tech Hub Phase II to support job creation in precision fermentation
  - \$70M from Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to build EV infrastructure, including in Decatur
- *Representative support:* US Senator Tammy Duckworth, US Senator Richard Durbin, and Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski
- Key employers that make up ~80% of current jobs in Decatur (ADM, Primient, TCCI, Caterpillar, DPS, Ameren, Mueller, Rivian)
  - *Leadership:* Leaders of these prominent companies have committed to be involved directly with Recompete, (e.g., on WORC’s Advisory Board)
  - *Recruitment:* All employers commit to recruiting from EnRich and DPS graduates, including interview preparation and job fair outreach
  - *Career Pathway Awareness:* Will work with EDC to design relevant Quality Career Pathways informed by positions and pay scales within their organization

**INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF PROPOSED PROJECTS**

Key WORC partners RCC, EDC, UW, and DPS already have long-standing relationships and are committed to working closely together. The projects are purposefully interdependent to ensure that residents in Decatur understand what opportunities are available to them, have opportunities to secure employment, and have support necessary to remain employed.

Project	Relationship to other component projects
1) Workforce Ecosystem Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide Labor Market Data Center access and bi-annual reports to all project partners so they can see where unemployed /underemployed individuals are, helping direct resources and recruitment strategies</li> <li>● Create Quality Career Pathways that can be used by EnRich and DPS career counselors to help students pick a technical track, or by ALICE Project to show potential for living wage increases by skill level</li> <li>● Set up career days and talks with important employers in the Decatur community to make career pathways come alive for Workforce Academy participants and younger students in Extended Day</li> <li>● Connect key employers, community organizations, and educators through Workforce Inclusion Council</li> </ul>
2) EnRich 2.0 and EnRich Workforce Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send facilitators to lead select essential skills Workforce Academy sessions and talk about RCC and EnRich opportunities</li> <li>● Use data from the Labor Market Data Center to identify census tracts where unemployed individuals are increasing to provide targeted outreach and marketing for EnRich</li> <li>● Admit students from Workforce Academy after they graduate or ALICE Project to improve living wage prospects</li> <li>● Depending on needs, refer students in need of extra support to ALICE Project or DPS Extended Day</li> </ul>
3) Workforce Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refer participants to EnRich for upskilling/training</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback to the EDC Workforce Ecosystem Platform on how career pathways resonate with younger residents</li> </ul>
4) ALICE Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data from the Labor Market Data Center to identify census tracts where ALICE individuals are increasing to provide targeted support</li> <li>• Refer participants to EnRich for upskilling/training</li> <li>• Refer families to Extended Day for additional wraparound support and childcare</li> </ul>
5) Extended Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide childcare for EnRich and ALICE Project participants</li> </ul>
6) WORC Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead coordination of strategy and activities across projects</li> <li>• Centrally manage external relationships</li> <li>• Lead pursuit of additional funding</li> </ul>

**EQUITY**

Equity is at the core of WORC’s mission to reduce the prime age employment gap among Black residents and other historically underserved groups in Decatur. Our project addresses inequities comprehensively to ensure that the benefits of the programs are shared equitably.

- Service area: Our service area was specifically chosen because of inequitable outcomes. The service area comprises 11 census tracts spanning Decatur’s “Urban Core.” Tract 31 (PAEG of 52%), Tract 6 (34%), and Tract 5.01 (29%) have highest need, which are contiguous to another eight tracts with higher-than-average Black populations and lower-than-average educational attainment. The total service area has a 17 pp PAEG. and 60% of Decatur’s Black population.
- Project objectives: The objectives of understanding opportunity, enabling employment, and sustaining employment address the core problems that create a high and sustained PAEG.
- Labor Market Data Center: The EDC’s Labor Market Data Center will allow Decatur to see key employment measures / indicators by census tract and be refreshed every 6-8 months, allowing WORC to monitor if key areas slip into higher unemployment or lower wages at a much faster rate vs. census data, allowing all program partners to act quickly to prevent long-term distress.
- Programs: The organizations that will work directly with individuals as part of their component projects—EnRich, DPS, United Way—are all trained in trauma-sensitive practices designed to address historical, systemic, and personal injustices that contribute to ongoing stress and trauma, creating supportive environments that promote healing.
- Wraparound supports: Support will be prioritized for members of the service area.
- Data and metrics: To measure equity, WORC Management will implement a tracking system to monitor the participation rates of historically underserved and minority groups, aiming for at least 70% participation from these communities. We will also assess the impact of our programs on reducing income disparities within five years or program completion, and track yearly data through surveys of program participants.
- Leadership: Diverse voices are involved throughout WORC component projects and leadership. More than 50% of component project leaders and WORC Leadership team members are Black; 100% are either Black or a woman.
- Hiring commitments: For new positions funded through EDA Recompete (e.g., Workforce Ecosystem Officer), we commit to ensuring more than 50% are people of color.



## **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Focus industries: Environmental sustainability is integral to Decatur's key manufacturing sectors, which are shifting towards less polluting processes and products. Precision fermentation cuts waste and energy use, and electric vehicle production aids in moving away from fossil fuels, thereby having both economic benefits and contributing to a more sustainable future.

Construction activities: The design and construction of the Hub will have energy-efficient systems, sustainable materials, and waste reduction practices, adhering to green standards.

Monitoring and evaluation: Environmental impact assessments will be conducted regularly, with findings used to adjust practices and reduce adverse impacts continually, so that WORC can respond to environmental conditions and adapt to future challenges.

## **LONGER TERM OUTCOMES AND GOALS**

We have five primary long-term outcomes WORC will work to achieve through all component projects by the end of the grant period. Progress toward these goals will be tracked and calculated on a quarterly basis by WORC Management, with additional data provided by the EDC's Labor Market Data Center:

1. Labor force participation gains: Increase employment among prime-age individuals by 6pp across the MSA and 14-20pp in the service area
2. Wage improvements: Elevate the median Black household income by 35-50%<sup>12</sup> by increasing employment via EnRich and Workforce Academy and moving ALICE individuals into higher-paying jobs
3. Job retention: For EnRich and Workforce Academy graduates, ensure 90%+ of participants have employment post-program and that 90% of those placed retain their jobs for at least 1 year post-completion.
4. Equity: Ensure at least 70% of program participants are Black residents or come from historically underserved populations, and that 50% or more of component project leadership and WORC leadership are people of color.

## **WORK CONDUCTED BETWEEN PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2**

New commitments: Since becoming a Phase 1 finalist, WORC has received additional commitments from 7 employers, 2 government entities, 3 US representatives, 4 community organizations, and 6 industry/ labor partners, in addition to project lead support.

Reduction in budget: We reduced the scrutinized the budget, reducing it from \$50M to \$46.7M.

Refinements to approach: Changes in component projects to improve efficacy and reach:

- *Project 1 – EDC Workforce Ecosystem Platform:* Built out Platform to include a Labor Market Data Center, priority Career Pathways, and a Job Opening and Exploration Board to underpin and enhance the effectiveness of all other component projects.
- *Project 2 – EnRich 2.0 and EnRich Workforce Hub:* Added a construction project to create the EnRich Workforce Hub, a dedicated space to help accommodate increased enrollment, provide proper training equipment, and strengthen the EnRich community.
- *Project 3 – DPS Workforce Academy:* Added the position of Post-Graduation Liaison that will maintain contact with graduates, organize alumni events, provide targeted support to alumni facing challenges in securing or retaining employment, and track outcomes.

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<sup>12</sup> Assumes EnRich and Workforce Academy participants will go from non-employment to earning \$40,000-\$60,000 / year, and ALICE Project participants receiving navigation support will increase incomes by \$5,000 / year

- *Project 4 – DPS Extended Day:* Re-structured the program, locations, and necessary staff to increase the number of families served in Extended Day from 900 per year to 1,400 per year, meeting 100% of need in the district.
- *Project 5 – UW ALICE Project:* Increased number of individuals served from 2,000 to 5,700 over the grant period by adjusting case loads based on hiring goals.

Confirmed efficacy of approach: We have benchmarked each component project against relevant entities to ensure our approaches are backed by best practices.

**RISK MITIGATION**

The Leadership Team of the component projects and the Recompete Coordinator (Gina Taylor) have a strong track record of working together in the Decatur Community. Their governance structure will include a strong risk mitigation plan (see Project 6: WORC Management). The below table outlines examples of specific risks associated with each project and provides strategic measures to manage and minimize these risks effectively. A more detailed risk mitigation plan will be created for each project and tracked by the WORC Management team.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
<b>1) EDC Workforce Ecosystem Platform</b>	
Timeframe to complete underlying data center is extended	Implement robust project management practices and conduct regular risk assessments
<b>2a) EnRich 2.0</b>	
Training does not meet evolving needs of job market	Work with EDC to ensure that technical training aligns with priority career pathways
<b>2b) EnRich Workforce Hub</b>	
Additional funding sources from DCEO and/ or local EDA are not available	Phased approach ensures that even if additional funding is not available, construction with leveraged funds, employer funds, and Recompete funds will achieve core goals
<b>3) DPS Workforce Academy</b>	
Low engagement or high dropout rates due to lack of perceived value or external pressures	Ensure content is engaging and informed by real-life (e.g., leveraging career pathways and bringing in speakers to talk about their experience) and plan cohort-building events
<b>4) UW ALICE Project</b>	
Support services not sufficient to address varied needs of participants or support staff is overwhelmed	Plan in advance for time periods that may require additional support (e.g., December) and have clear information available about the support services offered
<b>5) DPS Extended Day</b>	
Insufficient capacity to meet high demand for childcare services	Continue to optimize facility use to maximize number of students served, using adjacent school buildings, multi-purpose rooms, and large classrooms for programming
<b>6) WORC Management</b>	
Ineffective coordination and communication leads to siloed operations and inefficiencies	Leverage integrated project management system, share best practices, collect feedback, and establish clear communication channels