StriveTogether®

Transforming systems in pursuit of equitable outcomes

Actionable learning from the Cradle to Career Network

Baltimore's Promise | Baltimore, Md.

OUTCOMES:
- Postsecondary enrollment
- Employment

SYSTEMS INDICATORS:
- **Internship and mentorship opportunities/partnerships**
- **Financial barriers to postsecondary enrollment**
- **Accessible and equitable parental and community governance**
- **Financial well-being**

KEY LEARNING:
Starting relationships early with students and maintaining those relationships throughout and after their training is crucial to ensuring persistence and improving employment and postsecondary enrollment outcomes.

What did the network member do?

Baltimore's Promise is reconnecting youth to career and postsecondary opportunities through the Grads2Careers (G2C) initiative, which creates immediate opportunities for occupational skills training for Baltimore City high school graduates. In the first phase of the initiative, 400 participants completed training, 257 obtained employment and 35 enrolled in a postsecondary institution, for a total positive outcomes rate of 76%. Additionally, compared to Baltimore City high school graduates in 2009 who received a college degree six years after graduation, the median annual income of G2C completers is 22% higher for African American male G2C alumni and 33% higher for African American female alumni.

The initiative was launched in 2017 as a collaborative effort between Baltimore's Promise, the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development and Baltimore City Public Schools. The three partners leverage lived experience and continuous improvement to inform the model and make funding decisions. Grads2Careers alumni provide feedback, and their insights are weighed alongside outcomes and performance data, which is reviewed weekly and monthly. These successes have been made possible thanks to the **strong civic infrastructure** Baltimore's Promise has developed in their city over years of building trust with partners and community members. One example of this includes the Mayor's office and public school system absorbing two of the Grads2Careers staff positions, further strengthening their commitment to supporting community-based solutions to transform systems.

Baltimore's Promise uses both real-time programmatic

data as well as big-picture evaluation data to inform its work and improve its practices. This includes quantitative data on the pipeline of G2C participants from application to employment and qualitative data from participants on successes and challenges of the program.
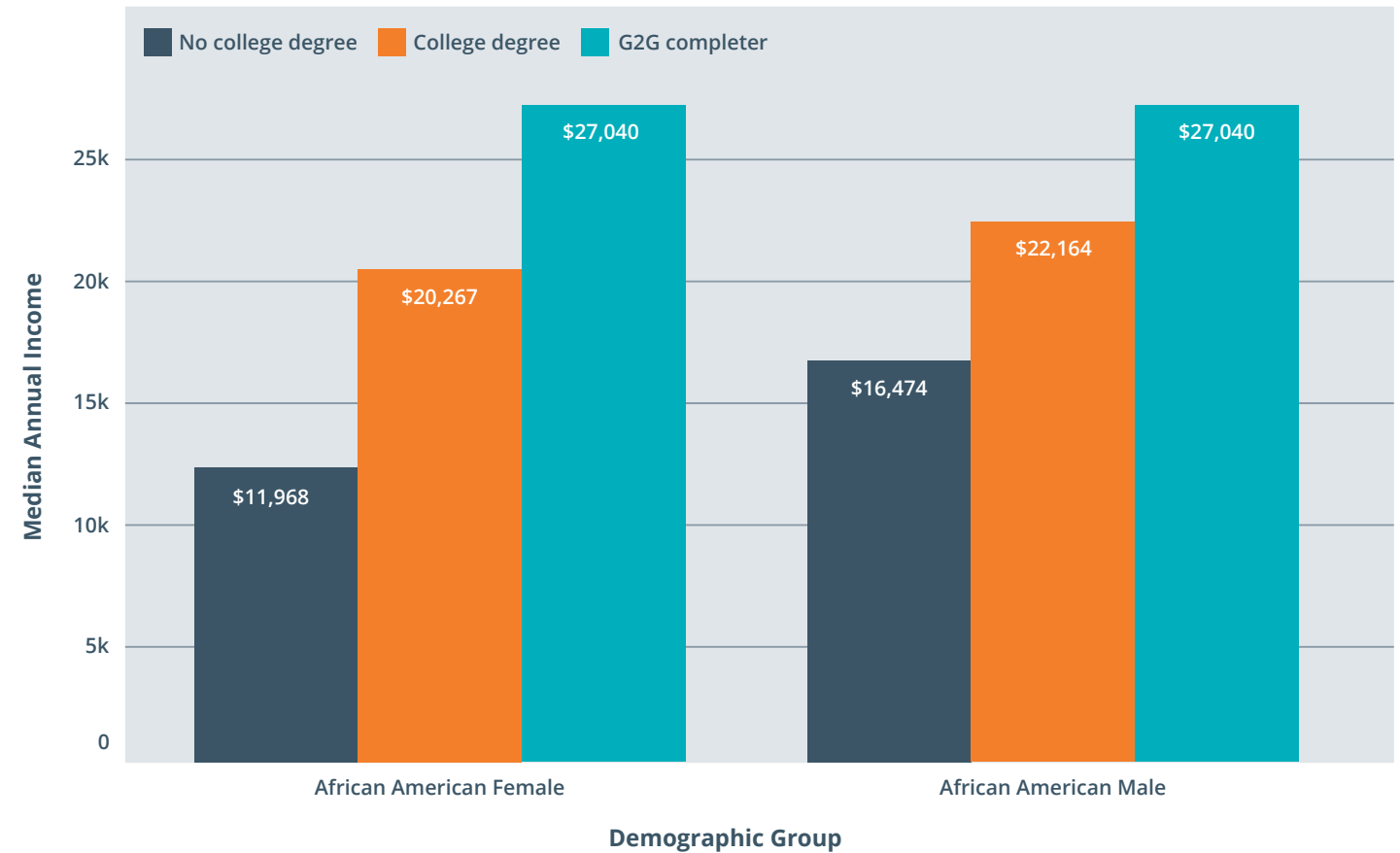
What are the challenges?

Access to internships and mentorships — which often include skills-based training opportunities — are one of the systems indicators that reveal how systems hinder economic mobility for youth. In Baltimore, 2009 Baltimore City high school graduates who did not pursue college earned about $13,400 less per year. In Baltimore, this is particularly true for African American youth, who are disproportionately disconnected from school and work. While creating accessible, skills-based training seeks to narrow those gaps, even more training slots are needed to create access for all disconnected youth.

What are the key takeaways?

This process has highlighted the need to start relationships early with students and maintain those relationships throughout and after their training. One example of this is an alumni stackable credentials track being implemented in 2023, which will allow alumni to remain connected to G2C even as their relationship to the program shifts. This will not only ensure persistence as G2C participants begin their employment post-training, but also to continue iterating on the program in ways that keep participants' best interests front and center.

2022 MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME OF CITY SCHOOL GRADUATES

Legend:
- No college degree
- College degree
- G2G completer

African American Female:
- No college degree: $11,968
- College degree: $20,267
- G2G completer: $27,040

African American Male:
- No college degree: $16,474
- College degree: $22,164
- G2G completer: $27,040

Y-axis: Median Annual Income (0, 5k, 10k, 15k, 20k, 25k)

X-axis: Demographic Group

G2C wage data as of September 29, 2022. To account for inflation, wages of 2009 City School graduates adjusted to 2020 dollars.