

FEBRUARY 29TH, 2024
EVENT BRIEF



2024 ANNUAL POLICY EVENT

BUILDING A MORE HOLISTIC CAREER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FOR BOSTON'S YOUTH

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THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY

On behalf of Northeastern's Community to Community Impact Engine, I'm thrilled to share critical insights from C2C's first annual policy forum: Building a More Holistic Career Development System for Boston's Youth, held February 29th, 2024. We are thankful for the partnership of the Dukakis Center for Urban & Regional Policy, the City of Boston's Worker Empowerment Cabinet and Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity, and the collaboration of youth leaders, community organizations, public agencies, Boston Public Schools, employers, higher education partners, youth service providers, and Northeastern faculty. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Lauren Jones, the Commonwealth's Secretary of Labor & Workforce Development, for joining us and demonstrating the Governor Healey's commitment to support all residents' access to economic mobility and quality careers.

We are delighted with the success of C2C's first annual convening and excitement it inspired in participants. This community came together with shared passion and diverse expertise, through robust conversations, to begin forming a coalition to develop and advocate for more integrated support for the transition from high school to career and economic success. We hope those reading this summary will also gain value from our efforts in partnership with public, community, and youth leadership to advance equitable practices and policies for Boston youth.

With your collaboration, we look forward to continuing to work across sectors to drive policy change towards shared prosperity for all youth and members of our communities.

In gratitude,



Lynn Sanders
Boston Regional Director
Community-to-Community Impact Engine
Northeastern University





CONNECTING SUMMER JOBS TO SCHOOL YEAR LEARNING & BEYOND GRADUATION

- ALICIA MODESTINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, C2C
- JOSH BRUNO, DIRECTOR OF EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT, BOSTON PIC
- ANNIE DUONG, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY INVESTMENT-US LEAD FOR JOHN HANCOCK
- CIGDEM TALGAR, VICE PROVOST FOR EDUCATION, TUFTS UNIVERSITY
- AMANDA WEEKS, SUMMER LEARN & EARN 2023

Our first panel was moderated by **Rashad Cope**, Deputy Chief of Worker Empowerment for the City of Boston. Rashad set the tone for the panel, emphasizing the importance of preparing our youth for success beyond high school; through skill development, career exploration, and employment. It also involves coaching, case management, family support, and mental health resources - a few examples of wraparound support every panel highlighted as essential.

Alicia Modestino presented on her decade-long research partnership with the City of Boston on its summer youth employment program (SYEP). Over the years, Boston's SYEP has grown, now comprised of five intermediaries collaborating to provide paid summer work and career development for the city's youth, an agile and resilient system able to respond to and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Alicia and her team have found that these programs boost job readiness, wages, and academic achievement. Furthermore, developing skills like communication, punctuality, conflict resolution, and teamwork has translated to increased graduation levels and reduced criminal involvement.

What comes next? The team has rigorously evaluated many short-term impacts of SYEP and is now assessing long-term strategies and outcomes, such as skills mapping and career building.

We then heard from **Amanda Weeks**, a young person who participated in the 2023 Learn & Earn program at the Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology. While her course focused on marketing and communication, she also learned professional skills. She and her cohort had the opportunity to visit universities, learning about tuition and diversity in higher education. She highlighted how valuable it was to practice public speaking and develop communication skills, building the confidence to voice her thoughts and manage her time.

The Boston PIC is one of the intermediaries connecting students with employers. From his experience there, **Josh Bruno** emphasized the importance of career exploration for youth. To Josh, no experience is a bad experience, all enable students to decide what does and does not work for them. **Annie Duong** of John Hancock's MLK Scholars Program echoed this, discussing the variety of ways employers can engage in this process. The primary goal is to have youth see themselves succeeding in university and professional environments; expanding the diversity of possibilities for youth to attain successful careers.

Employer engagement can include hosting job shadowing and boot camps, which the Boston PIC has facilitated, and employee volunteer opportunities. The city has also been rallying the intermediaries to recruit more employer partners, especially small and medium-sized companies. Annie noted this necessitates developing a support system for organizations that may not have adequate infrastructure to host youth interns. While providing access to a broader range of jobs is important, it is critical to ensure each experience is meaningful.

Cigdem Talgar brought her perspective from the lens of higher education. Both she and Annie urged institutions to have internal conversations about purpose. At Tufts, this means expanding the institution's impact on our shared communities to build resilience. To do this, co-creation is critical. Tufts eagerly joined the inaugural higher education consortium last year, viewing it as an opportunity to educate, and also to learn about what is important to future students.

Alicia expanded on this, calling for increased willingness from universities to blur the line between education and workforce development, removing barriers to higher education and allowing students to connect what they learn in the classroom to what they will do on the job. The value of SYEP lies in what it does beyond a wage. It is an opportunity developed with youth in mind, unlike those in retail or food service. The challenge ahead is ensuring this is understood by youth. An SYEP position may pay less than a retail job, so the added value from the former needs to be properly communicated in a way that is appealing to young people.

REALIZING UNTAPPED POTENTIAL IN CREATIVE CAREERS

- CARA MICHELL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, NORTHEASTERN
- JADA COOPER, NU SYEP 2023, BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY STUDENT
- CHRIS HOPE, FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE LOOP LAB
- NAKIA HILL, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, CITY OF BOSTON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CABINET
- ANTHONY BEATRICE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ARTS, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LaVonnia Montouté, Senior Director for Career Pathways at EdVestors, opened the session by highlighting the impact of professional artists and creatives on our everyday experience, and the importance of the creative sector in sustaining a vibrant and thriving workforce ecosystem. Featured researcher **Cara Michell**, presented her work reimagining maps to exhibit how community members view and move in their environment. Cara commented, "I have found over the past few years that my best collaborators are young people." She highlighted the importance of designing spaces for our youth to feel safe and represented.

In her work with 826 Boston, Cara has not viewed youth as research subjects, but as co-researchers, learning from them as they become empowered to ask critical questions about the world. To add and accept value from youth, she emphasized the necessity of professionals who establish and foster youth career pathways. Connecting students with creative professionals is only possible through the work of individuals like **Anthony Beatrice**, Executive Director of the Arts for BPS.

Anthony provided updates on the work in the district to increase access to the arts for more youth across the city, such as the BPS Arts Expansion (BPS-AE), operated in partnership with EdVestors. Among several resources highlighted, the conversation also focused on examples of early creative careers opportunities through the Bloomberg Arts Internship for rising seniors in Boston Public Schools. This is the infrastructure necessary to create connections between students and creative pathways they may not have known about while in school.

One young person who was able to tap into these opportunities is **Jada Cooper**, a Boston Arts Academy student who worked in a SuccessLink job in the Department of Philosophy & Religion at Northeastern during summer 2023. While she learned technical skills, she also grew as a leader and communicator. Being in an exploratory phase of her life, Cooper celebrated the opportunity to experiment and learn what she does and does not want in a career. She acknowledged her supervisors and teachers for being supportive and celebrating her ideas.

While technical skills learned during a work experience may not directly relate to a student's future career path, creative internships develop a wealth of transferrable skills. Anthony highlighted one such skill: "cognitive agility", or being able to think on your feet through your creativity. **Nakia Hill** has traveled to many cities and applauded Boston's commitment to providing diverse employment opportunities including in creative industries and careers. However, for this effort to continue to be impactful, there has to be investment across our community. Institutions have to be open and eager to partner. Nakia urges partners to identify employees who are excited to mentor, as it is an investment not just of money, but emotion, time, and skills.

Strong mentorship facilitates the outcomes that **Chris Hope** strives for at The Loop Lab, aiming to increase opportunities and spaces of agency for youth from low-income communities. This means paying young people a livable wage and teaching them how to manage their finances, create presentations, and operate in a workspace. The Loop Lab students learn skills in media arts technology, along with workplace skills required across all professional sectors, to help bridge the opportunity gap that occurs after high school graduation.

As Nakia highlighted, there is a need for financial investment in our community to create opportunities in areas where youth see their future. Investment to support artists who can mentor and teach young people, ensuring creative careers are livable careers. We also need to broaden young peoples' perspectives of what a creative career is to include spaces like the art services sector and elevate historically underrepresented identities to show them that anyone can be a professional creative.

KEYNOTE: MASSACHUSETTS SECRETARY OF LABOR, LAUREN JONES

C2C was honored to have Secretary Lauren Jones as our keynote speaker. In her remarks, Secretary Jones highlighted the Governor's focus on workforce development, not just to help the needs of large and small businesses, but to promote greater economic mobility for residents, including supporting youth development. Inspired by Governor Healy's "values first" leadership model, Secretary Jones always puts people and their talents at the heart of her agenda.

In addressing workforce challenges, Secretary Jones spoke about combatting the skills gap to bring in new talent from the sidelines. Her team has partnered with the Secretaries of Education, Economic Development, and Health & Human Services to tackle this, exemplifying how empowering workers requires holistic support, not just technical training.

Secretary Jones emphasized Massachusetts as a Commonwealth where we care about our fellow residents. This means prioritizing underserved communities, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, veterans, immigrants, and individuals living with disabilities, who have historically been left out of the talent development system. It involves not just buy-in from the public sector, but the private sector. Both have to reimagine what hiring and retaining talent looks like. Secretary Jones and her team are working to use federal and state funding to create partnerships and accomplish this goal.



During the fireside chat with Dr. Modestino, Secretary Jones shared more about her journey into government and public service. She emphasized the importance of building a network, a skill that is growing in youth career development. She also discussed the 2024 WIOA State Plan, which the Governor saw as an opportunity to articulate the administration's strategies for attracting, developing, and retaining talent. A key points of the plan is being intentional to serve targeted populations by partnering with community-based organizations. One of the biggest lessons Secretary Jones has learned in her role is how important collaboration is in workforce development. Through these relationships, the administration hopes to expand beyond programs like YouthWorks and into vocational training and early college where there is a direct path into a career. None of it will be possible without local feedback and participation.

In recognition of her accomplishments and dedication to advancement in workforce development, C2C awarded Secretary Jones the inaugural Northeastern University Community-to-Community Public Policy Innovation Award. We thank Secretary Jones for sharing her time with us and look forward to her leading us into a strong future for the Massachusetts workforce.



LEVERAGING PUBLIC INVESTMENT TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES IN GREEN CAREERS

- JOAN FITZGERALD, PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY & URBAN AFFAIRS, NORTHEASTERN, POLICY SCHOOL
- TRISHA VO, SYEP YOUTH EMPLOYEE 2023
- DAVO JEFFERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POWERCORPS BOS
- RON MARLOW, VP OF WORKFORCE & ADULT EDUCATION INITIATIVES, ABCD
- MEREDITH GERAGHTY, VP OF BASE BUILDING & FUNDRAISING, CODMAN SQUARE NDC
- KATHERINE WALSH, PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The third panel was moderated by **Jennifer Applebaum**, Managing Director of Workforce Development for Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), who centered the conversation on how to create opportunities in the green sector that are accessible, including for young people early in career exploration. To begin the discussion, **Joan Fitzgerald** presented her work to define what a “green” job is and what skills help job seekers break into this sector. Joan and her team are assessing programs in Boston and around the country, asking what is the best way not just to secure jobs, but to ensure individuals can move up a career ladder or transition to other positions.

Trisha Vo spoke from first-hand experience about the lack of awareness high school students about the professional development opportunities that exist for them. Trisha described how fellow students struggle to balance school and personal lives, with the daunting task of finding work to help pay family expenses. It would be beneficial for BPS students to have more clarity on what opportunities and pathways are available. She also highlighted the importance of mentorship, empowering youth to take chances, ask questions, and learn new skills.

Katherine Walsh of BPS echoed the importance of awareness of green career opportunities, and shared her career experience in jobs did not exist when she was a student. She advocated for connecting community partners with schools and developing relationships, citing communication barriers as a key difficulty in sharing available opportunities with students, especially those who cite climate anxiety as an issue of high importance to them.

Not only youth graduating from high school can benefit from learning about green jobs, and **Davo Jefferson** shared about the work of PowerCorps Boston, serving men of color between the ages of 18 and 30, who are often learning about the impacts of environmental injustice for the first time. **Ron Marlow** is also working to expand awareness and access to new green job opportunities through ABCD’s partnership with Rare and Power52, targeting workforce opportunities for the communities most impacted by the effects of climate change.

Meredith Geraghty of Codman Square NDC has been working to expand the organization’s Green Infrastructure Certification Program along with other platforms to connect community members and reentry citizens with green jobs. She emphasized Codman Square NDC’s unique focus on environmental justice for a CDC. Davo, Ron, and Meredith in working with underserved communities, all emphasized the need to embed wraparound services to meet students where they are at with housing, food, childcare, transportation, or other support.

Once they have entered the field, what comes next? Joan discussed the tough reality that employers do not always offer jobs with benefits and long-term growth potential. Many green sector jobs are seasonal or contract and require transiency. In response, Jennifer noted the importance of employers expanding their thinking about what skills are needed be and Ron prompted us to ask employers, “What are you looking for? And why are you looking for that as opposed to something else?” This can both address job vacancies and, as Meredith pointed out, increase worker retention.





CREATING MORE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CAREER PATHS IN THE LIFE SCIENCES

- JOANNE POKASKI, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, BETH ISRAEL LAHEY HEALTH
- ANGELI RAMOS TEJEDA, VERTEX HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER INTERN 2023
- CHRISTINE BOLZAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GLOUCESTER MARINE GENOMICS INSTITUTE
- MIRIAM ORTIZ, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & TRAINING, JUST A START
- HILLEL SIMS, DEAN OF STEM, RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY, & PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS, ROXBURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Moderator **Jared Auclair** brought life to the room as he opened the fourth and final panel of the day, challenging both the panelists and the audience, he started by asking of the life sciences field, “Do you need a college degree to be successful?” There is a great environment in Massachusetts for growth in the life sciences, with Governor Healy announcing on that same day a reauthorization of the Life Science Initiative with a \$1 billion, 10-year strategy. Given this dedication from the state, the panel dissected what it will look like to successfully translate this to workforce development.

Angeli Ramos Tejeda, was an intern with Vertex Pharmaceuticals in the summer of 2023, where she wanted to gain experience in a lab. Ultimately, the program exceeded her expectations. On top of on-the-job training, Angeli had the opportunity to participate in a professional work setting as a high school student. She went on field trips, learned about biotechnology as an industry, and formed connections with fellow students in her cohort. Inspired by her internship, Angeli plans to pursue biotechnology in college and beyond.

The panel also discussed the importance of diversifying this historically white dominated to reflect our communities. **Miriam Ortiz** of Just A Start noted that as new lab facilities are being constructed in Boston’s neighborhoods, more needs to be done to give the residents opportunities to work there. She said equity is at the heart of Just A Start’s mission, providing not just job training, but the wraparound support needed to be successful in a career as both a youth and an adult.

Christine Bolzan of GMGI, who operates the Gloucester Biotechnology Academy, echoed this sentiment. Chris and her team work to create career entry points in the life sciences for underrepresented individuals. Just A Start and GMGI both challenge the misconception that a college degree is necessary for a quality career in the life sciences.

With substantial investment in job training, Chris noted, programs that are not executed properly do students a disservice. If they are not robust enough to give students career longevity and options, they may find themselves being skilled out of their jobs. To make sure employees can continue to grow in their careers, **Hillel Sims** advocates for and runs incumbent working training through Roxbury Community College. One such partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital provides courses supporting employees to advance in their roles. While on-the-job learning is important, Hillel spoke to the importance of education in partnership with work experience, expanding both a student’s knowledge and their understanding of the field they hope to work in. Hillel encourages RCC students to take on internships and apprenticeships, to combine their academics with work-based learning.

The conversation turned to tackling systemic disconnects that inhibit talent from being connected with job opportunities more seamlessly. **Joanne Pokaski** spoke as leadership within a large healthcare organization. Her team is constantly reimagining work-based learning to meet the evolving needs of the sector. This includes paid training and partnerships with community-based organizations. At scale, however, there is action missing at the state and federal levels to address employment gaps across the sector. Funding opportunities also need to be scaled up. Miriam emphasized that being connected with partners across the sector is not an issue, it is the lack of funding necessary to coordinate a large-scale effort.

On top of coordination, Chris advocated for a large awareness campaign for students and educators. While there is money being pledged at the legislative level, it would not encompass cross-sector coordination or marketing efforts. This is a policy area where more conversation across the public and private sectors is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To view the recordings of each panel, please visit our event webpage linked [here](#).

Thank you again to our panelists, moderators, and attendees. We also thank the wonderful catering team and the John D. O'Bryant African American Institute for hosting us. Thank you to Pack Network for organizing the live stream and supplying the recordings.

This event would not have been possible without the committed staff of C2C and the Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity. Thank you for your time and dedication.

Community-to-Community (C2C) is an impact accelerator founded to use data and analysis to design, implement, and evaluate public policies that push the needle forward on complex problems found in our communities. We are scholars, researchers, policymakers, students, and community organizers working to utilize a community-engaged research approach that fosters long-term mutually beneficial partnerships. Read more about our work, news, and events, or get in touch by visiting [our website](#).

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