



OFFICE OF
**COMMUNITY
WEALTH BUILDING**

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

FY24



*Celebrating 10 Years of
Service to the Community*

By 1925
Transforms IOSL from struggling
burial society into thriving
insurance company in over 20
states with 100,000 members.

MAGGIE LENA WALKER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Levar M. Stoney
Mayor
City of Richmond, Virginia

This report was produced by the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building on behalf of Mayor Levar M. Stoney. We would like to recognize the following individuals for their contributions:

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB), we can take pride in the countless stories of transformation that have fueled our mission. Despite being one of the youngest players among Richmond's community partners, our impact has been deeply felt across the city. Over the past decade, we've made significant strides in creating opportunities and building pathways for Richmond residents to flourish.

I'm inspired by people like Hector Vazquez, a Peer Recovery Specialist, who, after 18 years of sobriety, now supports college students in their recovery journeys through the AmeriCorps Richmond Healthy Futures Opioid Prevention and Economic Opportunities Program (RHOPES). His story reminds us how community-based support can help rebuild lives.

Then, there's Mecca Washington, a single mother pursuing her dream of becoming a nurse. She attributes her success to OCWB's workforce program and the WomenRise scholarship. Leveraging our partnerships, Mecca is on track to graduate as a Licensed Practical Nurse. Her determination speaks to the resilience of our residents and reflects the strength of our community.

Ismael Romero, Richmond Public Schools freshman, exemplifies our strides in youth development. His involvement in the Youth Empowerment Council has helped him deepen his desire and hone his leadership skills to advocate for the rights and needs of others. His development fosters a return on our investment for everyone he may encounter.

Stephanie Power's journey shows how critical employment opportunities restore confidence and transform lives. After months of unemployment, she found a life-changing opportunity through OCWB. Exploring this new career pathway led to a promotion at RVA Rapid Transit.

Each of these stories, and many more, reflect the heart of what OCWB stands for—empowering individuals, breaking down barriers, and creating sustainable pathways out of poverty.



Caprichia Smith Spellman

Director, Office of Community Wealth Building

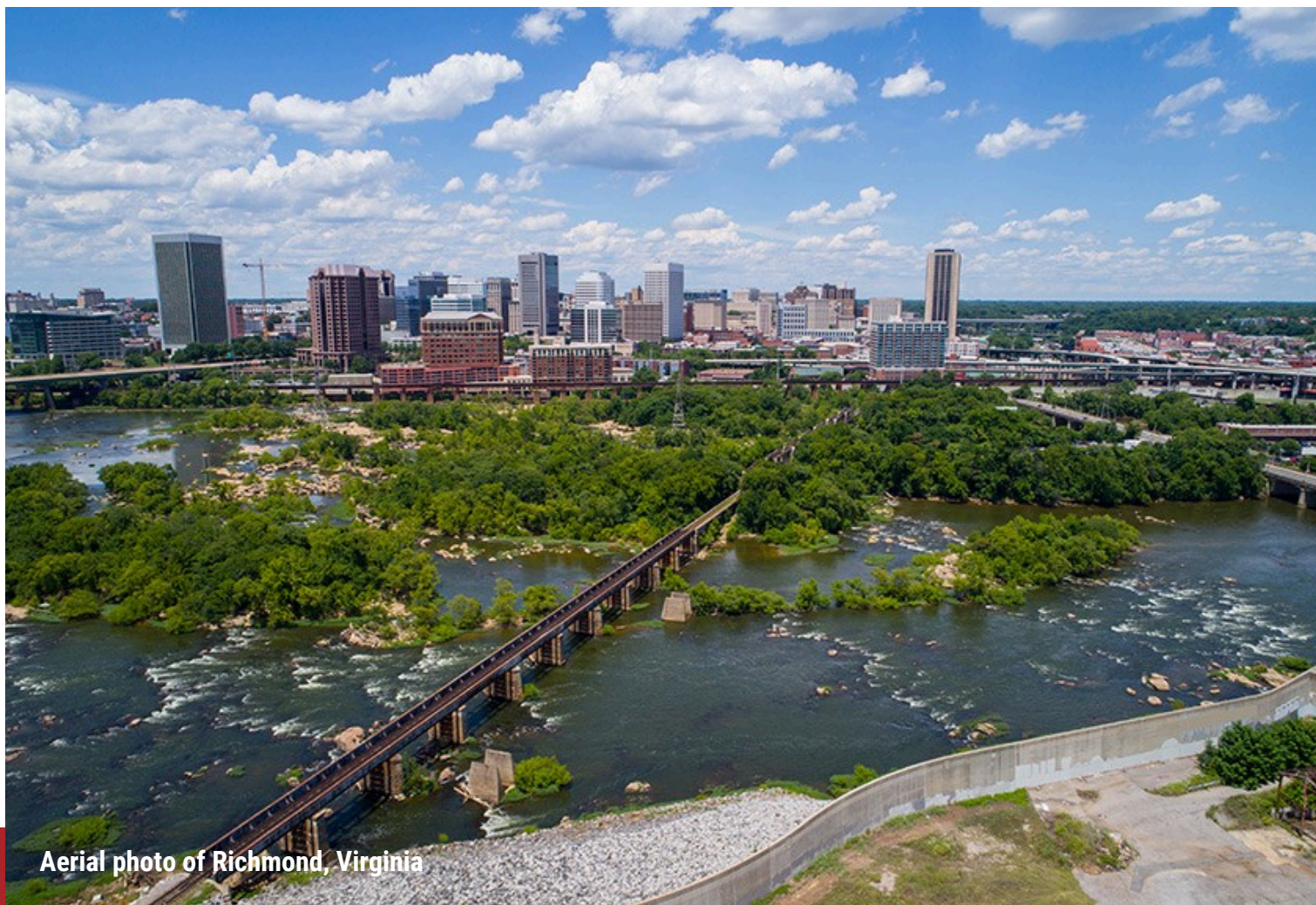
Over the last decade, we have provided training, barrier mitigation, financial literacy, and more, for over 50,000 residents. We've championed initiatives that promote housing stability, expand access to public transportation, and advance living wages, all while helping individuals like Hector, Mecca, Ismael, and Stephanie navigate their own unique paths to success.

But this is just the beginning. While we celebrate these victories, we also acknowledge that the work ahead is immense. Richmond still faces high levels of poverty, systemic inequities, and challenges that will require our continued focus, innovation, and collaboration. However, I am filled with hope, knowing that the perseverance of our residents, the strength of our partnerships, the support of our administration, and the passion of our team will propel us forward as we continue to lay the groundwork for a future in which every Richmond resident thrives.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our city's fight against poverty.

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Aerial photo of Richmond, Virginia

From Inception to Impact

This year marks the ten-year anniversary of the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) following the work of Richmond's former Anti-Poverty Commission. In 2011, the Anti-Poverty Commission was established to tackle Richmond's high poverty rate of 26%, one of the highest in the state. Its mission was to reduce systemic poverty and foster economic opportunities by addressing employment, housing, education, and health.

In 2014, the OCWB was established by the City of Richmond to empower individuals and communities to transition out of poverty and achieve economic stability.



Since its inception, the OCWB has been a leader in innovative poverty reduction strategies, focusing on community-centered approaches. Through collaboration with local interest holders (non-profits, businesses, educational institutions, and residents), the OCWB has built a robust network dedicated to promoting community wealth.

Over the past decade, the OCWB has provided workforce development programs, offering valuable training and employment opportunities to more than 50,000 residents. This includes doubling the amount of youth served and employed each year. Our programs have enhanced individual stability and contributed to the city's economic health.

The OCWB has also led initiatives to promote housing stability and affordability, expand public transportation access, increase living wages, and advance guaranteed income efforts. Additional programs have focused on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, food justice, and mental and physical health, empowering residents to achieve long-term financial independence and holistic well-being. We also developed a tool to measure household stability along the continuum of crisis-to-thriving that has been adapted by other organizations in the Richmond community.

Education has been another cornerstone of OCWB's work. By partnering with organizations like the Community College Workforce Alliance, Dream Academy, and Richmond Adult Technical Center, we have addressed the educational and training needs of over 1,200 residents in the last year alone.

This report provides a glimpse into OCWB's journey, from 2014-2024, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and future endeavors. Strategies for FY25 and beyond that can strengthen our efforts as we continue to address poverty and build sustainable community wealth in Richmond are also included.

ABOUT OCWB



OCWB staff at its annual Partner Appreciation Luncheon

Our Mission

The mission of the Office of Community Wealth Building is to facilitate equitable solutions that improve the quality of life and enhance wealth development opportunities for the City of Richmond's most impacted communities.

Our Vision

A thriving community where all residents have equitable access to wealth and well-being.

Our Approach and Strategy

Crisis-to-Thriving Model

The OCWB recognizes that economic mobility out of poverty requires an integrated approach to addressing the barriers residents face. Poverty is more than a function of inadequate income but includes intersections of determinants such as employment stability, housing, etc.

The OCWB addresses the intersections between determinants by establishing activities and programs through the implementation of our strategy. We engage the Crisis-to-Thriving Model. The model is based on the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (UMass, 2023).

Five-Point Strategy

Our strategy aligns with the City of Richmond's 2021-2025 Anti-Poverty Plan: to reduce overall poverty by 40% and reduce child poverty by 50% by 2030 in one of three focus areas, workforce innovation, affordable housing and social support services. Our five-point strategy provides a blueprint for all the activities in the OCWB portfolio.

Strategy ONE



Transforming systems that impact poverty

through collective impact, systems coordination, and policy development.

Strategy TWO



Providing quality service delivery to Richmond residents through our programs, and initiatives, including workforce development.

Strategy THREE



Improving the community's connectedness

includes inviting community residents to suggest and participate in planning program activities and helping them increase their knowledge of available resources.

Strategy FOUR



Strengthening the two-generation approach

provided to families experiencing poverty. This combines parent and child interventions to interrupt the generational cycle of poverty for the entire household.

Strategy FIVE



Increasing opportunities for wealth building

provided to people who are experiencing or have experienced poverty.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

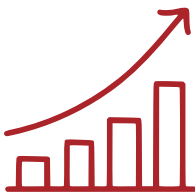


2014

**MARKS THE BEGINNING.
THERE WAS A LOT OF
WORK TO BE DONE!**

>26%

*The City of Richmond had one of
the highest poverty rates in the nation.*



HOUSING COSTS ON THE RISE



40-50% of people living in poverty experienced difficulty when trying to obtain and/or sustain affordable housing.

Looking Back

As we reflect on the past decade, it is evident that the OCWB has played a crucial role in transforming Richmond into a more equitable and prosperous city. The number ten holds particular significance in this context, symbolizing a milestone of enduring commitment, growth, and measurable impact. It marks a period of sustained effort and progress, during which the OCWB has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of Richmond's residents.

A Landscape of Barriers

In 2014, we managed the challenges of being “new to the game,” but innovatively poised for productivity. We helped the City of Richmond’s Administration build a structure to begin to not only identify and understand the perils and pitfalls of poverty, but to establish initial mechanisms to address:

A High Poverty Rate

The OCWB was faced with one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, with nearly 26% of Richmond residents living below the federal poverty line, with the child poverty rate at 22.5% (ACS Poverty Rate, 2014). Unemployment and underemployment were critical issues, resting at 25.5%, exacerbated by a lack of access to job training and educational opportunities. Over one-quarter of the city’s population was impoverished (Anti-Poverty Commission Report, 2013).

Affordable Housing Scarcity

Affordable housing was scarce, and many residents faced the threat of eviction and homelessness. Housing costs were increasing faster than incomes, especially for renters, who typically spent more than 30% of their income on housing.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

Gaps in Education

Additionally, significant gaps in educational attainment and resources were evident, particularly affecting families experiencing poverty. While approximately 82.3% of Richmond residents aged 25 and older had at least a high school diploma, only 37.1% held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Childcare and Transportation

Persistent barriers to employment, including limited access to childcare and transportation, continued to affect many residents. The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation reported that roughly 35% of impacted families reported difficulty finding affordable, quality childcare. Around 20-30% of residents in impacted communities had limited or no access to reliable transportation, making it difficult to commute to work and/or access essential services.

Health Outcomes

Poor health outcomes, particularly regarding chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, were prevalent among impacted communities, driven by limited access to healthcare services and nutritious food.

Approximately 20-30% of residents experiencing poverty reported having at least one chronic condition and 30-40% had limited or no access to regular healthcare services or health insurance. Only 10-15% of middle-class residents reported having chronic conditions and fewer than 10% expressed difficulty in accessing adequate healthcare or medical insurance.

Community Disengagement

A lack of engagement and trust between impacted communities and local government hindered poverty reduction efforts. Only about 10-15% of these residents participated in local initiatives. Limited access to information, lack of transportation, and economic pressures contributed to this low engagement.



GAPS IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Only 37.1% of Richmond residents, 25 years and older, held a bachelor's degree.



LIMITED ACCESS TO CHILDCARE

35% of impacted families reported difficulty obtaining childcare.



LIMITED ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

20-30% of residents living in poverty reported having no or limited access to transportation.



30-40%

POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES

The percentage of Richmond residents who reported not having access to healthcare services or healthcare.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024



2015 - 2016

**OCWB FOCUSES ON
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AND ADVOCACY FOR FAMILIES**



81%
SUCCESS RATE
390 enrolled; 212 secure jobs

BLISS

opened to provide wrap around services to families in RRHA communities.



1,000
NEW JOBS
through companies CoStar and Owens & Minor

Mental Health Awareness Heightened

Mental health issues were prominent, with inadequate services compared to affluent areas. Approximately 20-25% of residents in impoverished communities reported issues like depression and anxiety. Barriers to care included lack of insurance, limited affordable services, and stigma.

Food Security Needs Elevated

Food deserts and limited access to affordable, healthy food options led to nutritional challenges. Twenty-two percent (22%) of children in Richmond faced barriers to nutritious food and lived in food deserts.

Center for Workforce Innovation (CWI)

Fiscal year 2015 marked the beginning of bridge building for OCWB. The CWI became part of the OCWB, aiming to connect residents with jobs and training in high-demand occupations.

To address barriers like transportation and child care for Richmond residents, CWI launched BLISS—Building Lives to Independence and Self-Sufficiency—in 2015 to support economically-disadvantaged families.

Early Workforce Success

In FY16, CWI enrolled 390 participants, helping 212 secure jobs with an average wage of \$9.95 per hour, achieving an 81% success rate. Approximately 400 residents received intensive support, highlighting the need for the expansion of the workforce development program for Richmond’s estimated 20,000 adults who could benefit at the time.

Additionally, CWI partnered with businesses like Luck Stone and VCU to attract major employers like CoStar and Owens & Minor, creating 1,000 new jobs with salaries starting at \$30,000.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

In fiscal years 2017 and 2018, the OCWB placed significant focus on establishing strong collaborations with other workforce providers. Our participation with the Capital Region Workforce Partnership and the Capital Regional Workforce Investment Board led to partnerships with organizations such as HumanKind, the Daily Planet, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, and the Community College Workforce Alliance. We were also able to explore the benefits of indoor farming thanks to a grant from the Virginia Department of Agriculture.

Living Wage Certification Program

During this time, the Living Wage Certification Program, which was created in partnership with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, aimed to promote fair wages. This group worked on policies that encouraged livable wages and aimed to increase community and stakeholder engagement.

OCWB Workforce Program Helps Attract Businesses to the City

The CWI transitioned into the OCWB Career Stations. Additionally, the Department of Economic Development used the OCWB's Workforce Development Program to attract businesses, thereby enhancing job placement services.

More Convening: Seven Southern Cities

Furthermore, with a mini-grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the OCWB and the Office of Minority Development hosted a three-day learning exchange at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. Seven southern cities participated in this exchange, with a focus on increasing equity and economic inclusion in workforce, business, and community development.



2017- 2018

OCWB WORKFORCE PROGRAM EXPANDS!

\$1.9 MILLION

The OCWB secured funding to expand workforce services for city residents receiving TANF.



GROWTH IN COLLABORATION

The OCWB partners with multiple internal and external partners to forward its mission.



ADOPTED THE LIVING WAGE MODEL

Living Wage Certification Program highlighted businesses that paid a livable wage.

FROM CWI TO THE OCWB CAREER STATION

Name change

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

2019



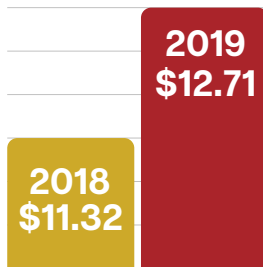
600

Number of residents served in FY19.



NEW

OCWB, Mindful Morning and the Robins Foundation launch the Giving Wall.



AVERAGE LIVING WAGE
Increases by 12% from 2018 for OCWB participants



2020

OCWB HELPS RICHMOND RESIDENTS NAVIGATE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BASIC INCOME PILOT LAUNCHES

The Richmond Resilience Initiative (RRI) launches.

Expanded Programs and Services

In FY19, the OCWB expanded programs and services, serving 600 participants, representing a 38% increase compared to the previous year. The employer network grew to include 327 businesses, many of which employed residents supported by the OCWB. Among these businesses, 38 became living wage certified, demonstrating our continued commitment to fair wages for all workers.

Additionally, the OCWB launched an innovative social enterprise project, the Giving Wall, which provided a unique digital platform for connecting residents in need with community supporters, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and community care.

Youth Residents Increased Summer Engagement

The Mayor's Youth Academy (MYA) has been a cornerstone of our efforts, serving 191 youth annually. This program not only imparted valuable career development and leadership skills but also provided youth with practical experience, significantly enhancing their future employment prospects.

Average Living Wage Increases

The average living wage for participants increased from \$11.32 to \$12.71, a 12% rise that contributed to greater financial stability for families working with the OCWB.

The OCWB Serves through the Pandemic

In March 2020, the pandemic created unprecedented financial challenges and exacerbated social inequities as economic and social disparities between identity groups became evident in areas such as employment, housing, education, wealth, health, food, and technology access. The OCWB responded by shifting service delivery strategies, expanding partnerships, and planning to meet these challenges (OCWB Annual Report, 2020).

Virtual Migration

By the end of April, the OCWB launched virtual services and education for residents, offering workforce development and placement, employer recruitment, housing, health, supportive services, and technical training for partners. During the last quarter of FY2020, 765 residents participated in virtual sessions, and 276 personnel from partner agencies attended virtual resource and technical training seminars.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

The Launch of the RVA Family Crisis Fund

The OCWB also distributed \$563,500 in financial aid to 1,127 families with children through the Family Crisis Fund (FCF), a partnership with the Robins Foundation, the City of Richmond, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, Clelin Ferrell, and the EnRichmond Foundation.

Systems Change: Eviction Diversion

Additionally, the OCWB developed a regional eviction prevention model with partners. This model provided over \$5.9 million in COVID-19 relief funds for rent and mortgages, benefiting more than 2,443 households and 7,084 residents within six months. Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS) was named the model's administrator and secured several state and local contracts in June 2020 to enhance rental assistance access. The FCF and eviction prevention model significantly helped stabilize households.

Increased Accessibility to School and Information

Throughout the pandemic, the City Ambassadors informed the OCWB of the digital divide that made it impossible for some Richmond residents to access needed resource information. The City Ambassadors led community engagement activities delivering resource information, door-to-door, and in every venue where residents from impacted communities frequented. The team distributed more than 60,000 flyers, placing 20,000 alone in RRHA communities to get information to residents. In FY21, the City Ambassadors launched the *We See You* virtual learning initiative in which they helped Richmond Public Schools (RPS) students get access to physical and digital resources necessary to foster educational connections.

The Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot Begins

The first cohort of the guaranteed basic income program, the Richmond Resilience Initiative (RRI), also launches with a cohort of eighteen participants.



2021

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE
DISTRIBUTED FOR CRISIS MITIGATION.**



\$563,500

Total amount of money distributed to participants during fiscal year.



**EXPANDED ACCESS TO
CAREER SERVICES**

Services were extended in the community to five Richmond Public Libraries, one community center, and one community residential site in the East End.



\$5.9 MILLION

COVID-19 relief funds provided to residents for rent and mortgages.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014 - 2024



Network2Work RVA Partnerships Fosters Employer Connections

In FY22, the OCWB partnered with the Regional Workforce Coalition, Capital Region CareerWorks, United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg, and ChamberRVA on the Network2Work RVA (N2W) platform. This tool helps individuals interested in career pathways in healthcare, IT, manufacturing/logistics and construction trades get connected to employers with jobs paying competitive wages that offer career advancement.

Strategic Partnerships Emerge

The OCWB collaborates with over 120 partners to forward our mission in the City of Richmond for impacted communities. Through a local community fund managed by the United Way, WomenRise scholarships cover the cost of direct care services per child when a mom is enrolled in classes or a training program. ReWork is a workforce partner committed to empowering unemployed adults living in Richmond's East End to gain thriving careers through one-on-one intensive career counseling, employment services, and financial literacy coaching. J&G Workforce Development Services partners with OCWB to provide job opportunities in high-demand occupations. Bridging the Gap is another partnership that supports our participants in obtaining Solar Panel training and certification opportunities to underemployed and unemployed participants. Befriend partners with OCWB to provide one-on-one mentoring to participants who need a little extra help along their journey to economic mobility.

MYA Youth Obtain Community Health Worker Certification

The Community Health Worker (CHW) certification is a free 180-hour training offered through Richmond City Health District. The program provided ten MYA participants with an opportunity to understand the CHW role, enhance employable CHW skills, learn concepts in community health and health promotion, apply preventive health knowledge, and practice outreach and advocacy.

Community Connectors Raise Awareness

In FY22, OCWB had a total of 19 workforce participants who served as Community Connectors. The connectors help engage the community by making sure that the citizens are aware of resources and equipped with the tools to improve their job readiness.

2022

**PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
HEIGHTENS OPPORTUNITIES FOR OCWB
PARTICIPANTS**

120

Strategic partnerships stewarded



10

Youth become certified as Community Health Workers through MYA partnership



19

Workforce participants become Community Connectors

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES: 2014-2024

2023 - 2024

**PROGRAM INNOVATION
DROVE FY23 - 24**



79%

AmeriCorps program, RVA Health Corps, exceeds its program objectives by Q3, serving 1,723 individuals.



2024 BEST PROGRAM

Youth Engagement Services (YES) is honored by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals.

AmeriCorps Exceeded Program Goals

In fiscal years 2023 - 2024, multiple programs achieved significant milestones. RVA Health Corps served 1,723 individuals, surpassing 79% of its target and exceeding its education goal by reaching 1,484 people. RHOPES exceeded its peer recovery goal, supporting 3,391 individuals, while Environmental Stewardship made notable progress by treating 17 acres of land, improving six acres, and enhancing four miles of trails or rivers.

Career Services Adopted a Sector-Based Workforce Strategy

Career Services revamped its approach to focus on high-demand careers in construction, logistics, healthcare, and cybersecurity. It used a cohort-style model that fostered supportive learning environments and enabled 484 residents to achieve program success.

RRI Launches a Third Cohort for Returning Citizens

The RRI pilot program engaged another 46 families, providing crucial financial support that led to better economic management, debt reduction, and enhanced credit standing for a total of 64 families to date. This initiative empowered participants to invest in their families' futures, improving housing conditions and enriching their children's education. The third cohort provided basic income to 30 justice involved participants.

Youth Engagement Hires Record Number of Youth

Additionally, the MYA Summer 2024 Work-Based Learning Program set a new benchmark with over 500 youth participating and logging over 13,000 work hours, significantly boosting their soft skills, confidence, and financial responsibility. The Youth Empowerment Council demonstrated leadership by addressing gun violence prevention and presenting a comprehensive four-part recommendation to the community. Recognized as the Best Youth Workforce Development Program by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals, Youth Engagement Services (YES) was celebrated for its innovation in youth development.

OCWB Launches New Wealth Building Initiatives

New wealth building initiatives emerge to advance our mission to promote equitable solutions to advance holistic wealth and wellness. The RVA Doulas-in-Training program is designed to enhance maternal health. The Growers Academy supports urban farming, which increases access and affordability of healthy food options for impacted families.

CHARTING CHANGE: STRATEGIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

As we look ahead, our mission at the OCWB remains firm. To develop a deeper understanding of poverty within the City of Richmond, we are aware of the importance of examining the complexities of our plight from multiple perspectives. This forward-looking approach ensures that we recognize the existing challenges while identifying opportunities for meaningful interventions that promote upward mobility and economic stability for all residents. By comparing poverty indicators across Richmond and its surrounding localities, we aim to foster a more equitable and inclusive community where everyone has the chance to thrive. Additionally, we are committed to expanding our programs to reach more residents, particularly enhancing youth and financial empowerment initiatives.



Priority One **Increased Accessibility and Inclusivity**

We are committed to increasing the accessibility of our services through the expansion of partnerships with diverse communities impacted by poverty and organizations that have developed resources to support those with language, citizenship, and other barriers impacting their ability to attain self-sufficiency. We have partnered with the Community College Workforce Alliance to promote bilingual class offerings that will be available in-person and virtually. Our collaborative relationship with the City of Richmond's Office of Immigrant and

Refugee Engagement enables us to expand wealth building and workforce development opportunities for all.

As a new member of the Annie E. Casey Immigrant Youth and Young Adult Education and Career Technical Assistance Project Learning Community, our YES team will also help us strengthen inclusivity in service delivery. This project is designed to help communities build and enhance culturally- and linguistically-accessible programming.

Internally, we will continue our commitment to diversifying our staffing complement to ensure that cultural diversity and inclusion is not just phrased but practiced. To better serve the diverse needs of our community, we will add a Bilingual Engagement Specialist to our team, specifically dedicated to supporting the Latino community in accessing employment services and resources that foster economic growth.

In FY25, the OCWB will build upon our success with AmeriCorps programs to create RVA Connects. RVA Connects navigators will not only help community members gain access to vital resources available to foster economic mobility and comprehensive well-being, but also receive career training, educational awards, financial empowerment opportunities, and more to achieve holistic wealth and wellness, personally.



CHARTING CHANGE: STRATEGIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025



Our investment in building capacity extends far beyond our internal team. We remain committed to ensuring that our partners at RVA Rapid Transit, Bridging the Gap RVA, Happily Natural, and other grassroots organizations remain equipped to meet the evolving needs of our community by sharing access through our professional development and training relationship with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

Additionally, we will expand our reach to serve more Richmond Public School students during the academic year to include career exploration and soft skills development for 8th graders and life-ready preparation through career and technical education programs at the Richmond Technical Center. As we endeavor to increase access for all to thrive, providing the next generation with essential skills for the future success of our workforce is at the forefront.

Furthermore, we aim to extend our programs to include justice-involved youth, providing opportunities for growth and reintegration. Through these efforts, we aim to enhance the inclusivity and impact of our programs across Richmond.

Priority Two

Program Expansion and Enhanced Evaluation

Program Expansion

In FY25, Career Services will implement new programming and expand its impact by enhancing current offerings through a cohort model. The upcoming training will include interpretation and tax preparation, virtual office assistance, small business bookkeeping, personal care aide, lead abatement, asbestos abatement, and construction and demolition management certifications, all aimed at equipping participants with valuable skills for workforce success.

AmeriCorps will add a second cohort of Community Health Workers through their RVA Health Corps and pilot a Wealth Navigator program to address barriers to holistic wellness. Additionally, the Wealth Building team will launch a credit clinic and the second cohort of doula training, building on the initial program's success to further support maternal health in the community.





Enhanced Evaluation

The OCWB will adopt a more robust and comprehensive evaluation framework to enhance the effectiveness of our efforts. By implementing advanced evaluation methods, including the use of common measures and real-time data analysis, we can gain deeper insights into the impact of our initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Enhanced evaluation will enable us to better track progress, understand the effectiveness of different strategies, and allocate resources more efficiently. This approach will also foster greater transparency and accountability, ensuring that our interventions are responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Through rigorous evaluation, the OCWB aims to refine our strategies, optimize outcomes, and ultimately drive more meaningful and sustainable progress toward eliminating poverty in Richmond.

Economic Mobility Study

We will work with a consultant to conduct a comprehensive economic mobility study. This study will provide essential insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by our residents, enabling us to develop targeted strategies to enhance access to resources, create sustainable employment pathways, and break cycles of poverty. By addressing these unique community challenges, we can shape programs and policies that promote long-term economic stability and upward mobility for all Richmond residents.

Priority Three

Integrating a Wholistic Measurement

In the context of advancing the economic mobility framework in the City of Richmond and its surrounding region, the use of "common measures" provides several significant benefits. This term refers to standardized metrics and evaluation criteria that different organizations, whether local government agencies, non-profits, or community groups—agree to use in assessing and reporting on their efforts. Common measures can benefit coordinated efforts in the following ways:



CHARTING CHANGE: STRATEGIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025



Enhanced Collaboration and Coordination

Unified goals and efficient resource allocation are key benefits of adopting common measures. When organizations align around shared objectives using the same metrics, it ensures that all parties are working toward the same outcomes, fostering better coordination and collaboration. Additionally, standardized metrics allow organizations to identify overlapping areas of work, reducing duplication and leading to more efficient use of resources. This approach enables better targeting of interventions, ultimately improving the effectiveness of collective efforts.

Improved Data Integration and Analysis

Comprehensive data plays a crucial role in understanding economic mobility, and common measures facilitate the integration of data from various sources. By combining this information, organizations can gain a more complete picture of the economic mobility landscape, allowing for a deeper understanding of how different interventions impact the community as a whole. This holistic view enables more informed decision-making and helps tailor strategies to address community needs effectively.



Standardized metrics enable more accurate comparisons and evaluations of program effectiveness, supporting informed decision-making. This data-driven approach allows organizations to adjust strategies based on evidence, ensuring that resources are directed toward interventions that have the greatest impact and produce the best outcomes.

Increased Accountability and Transparency

Common measures offer a consistent framework for tracking progress and outcomes, ensuring clear performance tracking and accountability toward economic mobility goals. This transparency allows stakeholders, including the public and funders, to better understand the impact of initiatives and identify areas for improvement, fostering trust and confidence in the work being done.

CHARTING CHANGE: STRATEGIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025



Facilitation of Funding and Support

Using common measures attracts funding by showing funders and donors a commitment to rigorous evaluation and accountability, signaling that organizations are working together effectively to address economic mobility. Consistent reporting also builds trust among stakeholders and the community, highlighting a unified effort and a dedication to achieving measurable results.

Enhanced Community Impact

Common measures support a holistic approach to economic mobility by ensuring that all relevant factors are considered and addressed, leading to more effective strategies that tackle multiple dimensions of economic mobility. Additionally, engaging the community in setting and understanding these measures fosters involvement and ownership, helping residents see how their needs are being addressed and the progress being made.

THINKING THROUGH A NEW METRIC

To effectively advance economic mobility, employing standardized metrics is crucial for a clear and comprehensive evaluation of progress. Common measures provide the foundation for assessing the impact of various initiatives aimed at improving residents' economic well-being. By utilizing a consistent set of indicators, organizations can align their efforts, track changes over time, and make data-driven decisions.

Key examples of common measures used in economic mobility frameworks include:

- **Income and Employment**: Metrics such as changes in household income, employment rates, and job retention.
- **Education and Skills**: Measures of educational attainment, skills development, and access to training programs.
- **Housing Stability**: Data on housing affordability, eviction rates, and housing quality.
- **Health Outcomes**: Indicators related to access to healthcare, chronic disease management, and overall health improvements.
- **Levels of Poverty**: Addressing poverty requires multiple measures: Absolute Poverty assesses whether individuals can meet basic needs like food and shelter, highlighting the struggle to secure essentials. Relative Poverty compares incomes within a region to reveal economic inequality and guide efforts to reduce disparities. Multidimensional Poverty includes factors like access to housing, healthcare, and education, offering a broader view of poverty and informing targeted interventions.

INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS YIELD IMPACT

Innovative Interventions

Over the past decade, the OCWB has navigated a complex and evolving landscape of issues impacting residents experiencing poverty. From tackling high unemployment rates and housing instability to addressing the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OCWB has remained dedicated to improving the lives of Richmond's most vulnerable populations through comprehensive and adaptive strategies. These strategies include innovative programming as highlighted herein.

AMERICORPS

Program Summary

AmeriCorps is a federal program in the United States that engages individuals in public service work to improve communities and address critical needs nationwide. The City of Richmond hosts two AmeriCorps programs: RHOPES and RVA Health Corps.

The RHOPES program is a collaborative community initiative that engages service members in two focus areas: Healthy Futures and the Environmental Stewardship program. RHOPES members serve at locations as Peer Recovery Coaches to deploy proven recovery prevention programs to combat the rising opioid crisis.

Environmental Stewardship members provide direct service in (1) treating and improving parks, public green spaces, trails, and rivers through invasive species removal, debris removal, and plant establishment and (2) helping children develop safe and healthy habits to increase their pedestrian and bike safety awareness.

RVA Health Corps is a City of Richmond AmeriCorps program that will recruit 32 individuals to serve the community as Community Health Workers. RVA Health Corps members are trained to receive certifications, which improve their opportunities to enter the healthcare industry after their years of service.

STORIES THAT INSPIRE US



Hector Vazquez
RHOPES AmeriCorps Member
Peer Recovery Specialist

After 18 years of sobriety, a retired Electrician, Hector now supports others in their recovery journeys at the college site, VCU RAMS in Recovery. This is a testament to the transformative power of community-based support.

AMERICORPS PROGRAM IMPACT

The RVA Health Corps, RHOPES, and Environmental Stewardship programs have made significant strides toward their 2024 goals. By Q3, RVA Health Corps served 1,723 individuals (more than 79% of its target) and exceeded its education goal by reaching 1,484 people.

RHOPES surpassed its peer recovery goal, supporting 3,391 individuals. Environmental Stewardship has made progress, treating 17 acres of land, improving six acres of land, four miles of trails or rivers treated and four miles improved, reflecting strong ongoing efforts across all programs.



STORIES THAT INSPIRE US

Stephanie Power

Community Engagement & Programs
Manager
RVA Rapid Transit

After months of unemployment, Stephanie Power found a life-changing opportunity through OCWB's workforce program.

Starting as a Transit Ambassador, she quickly gained skills and was promoted to Community Engagement & Programs Manager.

"The transformation I've experienced by working as a Transit Ambassador with RVA Rapid Transit has been palpable. During my unemployment, I struggled with mounting depression... Through the OCWB, I built confidence by becoming a valued team member, working for a cause that uplifts equitable transportation in our region, aligning with my values, and improving my life as a bus rider."



Mecca Washington

Nursing Student
Certified Mental Health Nursing Assistant



Mecca Washington, a single mother of five, works as a Mental Health professional in Richmond. She joined OCWB's workforce development program over a year ago and recently re-enrolled to pursue an LPN with the WomenRise Scholarship.

Currently in an 18-month nursing program at Bon Secours Mercy Health, she plans to graduate in March 2026 and aims to become a registered nurse and own a skilled nursing facility.

"I like this program because of the support I get. The people from OCWB have helped me put this into motion. My Engagement Specialist, Mr. Keith, helped me get the WomenRise Scholarship. I had a lot of support because it was just me and my five kids. It has been a long seven-year journey."

CAREER SERVICES

Program Summary

Career Services assists jobseekers with obtaining the skills they need to secure employment and enter promising careers. Our work is rooted in these core beliefs: that every Richmond resident and family should have the tools, resources, and opportunities to thrive and that every local business should have access to the talented workforce it needs to grow.

Career Services offers career exploration, job readiness, pre-employment and vocational training, support services, and community referrals, offering a range of services, including two-generation-focused case management, vocational training and soft skill development, job development for in-demand occupations, and employment retention services. These efforts underscore our commitment to meeting the community's evolving needs and supporting long-term employment success.

In FY23, Career Services revamped its model to focus on high-demand careers in construction, logistics, healthcare, and cybersecurity, adopting a cohort-style approach for training. This method fosters a supportive learning environment, helping participants build peer networks, stay motivated, and enhance skills. The collaborative spirit and shared experiences boost confidence and lead to better employment outcomes.

As a result, 484 residents achieved program success.

INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS YIELD IMPACT

RICHMOND RESILIENCE INITIATIVE (RRI)

Program Summary

The RRI, Mayor Levar Stoney's guaranteed income pilot, was established in 2020 to support residents in Richmond, Virginia, impacted by the 'cliff effect.' Through its partnership with Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and UpTogether, the OCWB has engaged 94 families, to date, who neither make a living wage nor qualify for federal benefits due to their household income.

RRI, now pursuing its fourth cohort with general funds, strives to help residents thrive, and not merely survive, by offering a \$500 monthly supplement to their income for 24 consecutive months. Approximately \$604,000 has been distributed, to date.



RRI PROGRAM IMPACT

During FY24, the RRI pilot program profoundly impacted participating families by providing essential financial support that fosters stability and growth. Through this initiative, participants have achieved significant milestones, including improved economic management, debt reduction, and enhanced credit standing. The program has also empowered them to invest in their families' futures, from securing better housing to enriching their children's lives through education and extracurricular activities.



Kiki Ramos

Certified Pharmacy Technician

Kiki Ramos, a Certified Pharmacy technician and mother of five pursuing a master's in psychology, has used the RRI program to achieve financial stability. This support has helped her pay for daycare, reduce debt, and improve credit, all while diligently saving for homeownership.

"This program bridges the gap for those who need public benefits but are not eligible. My son met and had an awesome conversation with Mayor Stoney. This experience changed my and his thinking about the efforts Mayor Stoney is making to truly improve the quality of life for the citizens of Richmond."



Emanuel Johnson

Logistics & Transportation Professional

Emanuel Johnson is a logistics professional and father of five. Through RRI, he's financed his sons' extracurricular activities, supported his mother, covered graduation and prom costs, taken a family vacation, and completed his CDL training, all while maintaining financial stability.

"Being in this program has given me hope for a better future for me and my family and has genuinely helped improve our quality of life. Thank you for bringing a program like this to our city."

INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS YIELD IMPACT

STORIES THAT INSPIRE US



Marilyn Joyner

Retired

Entrepreneurship and Financial Empowerment Program Participant

At nearly 70, Marilyn Joyner has shown that learning never stops. After retiring from Medicaid and seeking work, she rejoined OCWB's program and is now in the Entrepreneurship program, aiming to start a notarizing business. She finds the classes highly informative and is excited to share her new knowledge of record keeping and tax planning with her family.

"I am very impressed that many workshop facilitators are from my community. I have not seen much of that in Richmond. The classes are short and so informative. I wish I had this information about running a business years ago when I was younger."

WEALTH BUILDING

Program Summary

The Wealth Building program has evolved from the OCWB's Social Enterprise Initiative into a comprehensive effort to empower residents with the knowledge and tools needed for lasting financial stability and economic prosperity.

Community collaboration is vital to this program, as it brings together financial institutions, community nonprofits, and internal city departments to create a coordinated approach to fostering, and improving access to, upward economic mobility.



WEALTH BUILDING PROGRAM IMPACT

The program impacted 290 individuals through financial empowerment and entrepreneurship initiatives, including a community wealth-building fair, six financial management series with seven workshops each, and two, 13-week entrepreneurship series.

It also offered Budget for Life, Money Smart and other money management sessions, as well as, training for aspiring entrepreneurs.

In FY24, the RVA Doulas-in-Training program and Growers Academy were introduced. The RVA Doulas-in-Training program, leveraging new Medicaid reimbursement for community doulas, provides hands-on training and pre-employment skills to improve maternal health and create economic opportunities.

The Southside Growers Academy supports urban farming and sustainable food production, equipping participants with the skills to start and maintain local farms and gardens.

INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS YIELD IMPACT

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SERVICES (YES)

Program Summary

The youth-serving arm of the OCWB, YES, home of the MYA, was established in 2010 to develop Richmond's future leaders and workforce. YES is a comprehensive program that engages youth ages 12-24 in career exploration through work-based learning and youth development. It offers job readiness training, leadership development, entrepreneurship opportunities, mentoring, and exposure to post-secondary education and career exploration options.

To advance these efforts, the Youth Empowerment Council, Summer Work-Based Learning Program, and MYA Forward are key programs. The Youth Empowerment Council engages youth in local government, preparing them for leadership through civic engagement and community involvement. The Summer Work-Based Learning Program provides career coaching, real work experience, and mentoring, equipping youth with essential skills for future employment. MYA Forward targets older youth (ages 18-24) who are not in school or employed, offering job training and skills development in industries such as healthcare, skilled trades, and IT, to help them gain and/or retain employment and achieve career advancement. Traditional middle-schoolers, ages 12-13) are engaged in career exploration as we build a pipeline to increase awareness and access to post-secondary options for impacted youth.

Through these initiatives, YES is dedicated to nurturing Richmond's future workforce and developing the next generation of leaders who will drive the city's growth and success.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SERVICES
at the Office of Community Wealth Building

Home of the



MAYOR'S YOUTH ACADEMY

YES PROGRAM IMPACT

The Summer 2024 Work-Based Learning Program achieved unprecedented success, with over 500 youth aged 14-24 participating in diverse work-based learning experiences, marking a pivotal moment in the program's 14-year history.

The program's extensive impact is evident as participants logged over 13,000 work hours across various sectors, enhancing their soft skills, confidence, time management, and financial responsibility. The Youth Empowerment Council further demonstrated leadership by addressing gun violence prevention, offering a four-part recommendation to the Administration and community, underscoring the program's commitment to fostering civic engagement and community solutions.

YES was recognized for Best Youth Workforce Development Program by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals.

STORIES THAT INSPIRE US

Ismael Romero
YES Youth Empowerment
Council Member



Ismael Romero, a Richmond Public Schools freshman and MYA Youth Empowerment Council member, joined the program inspired by his sister's involvement. He aims to develop advocacy skills to speak for others. Ismael plans to study mechanical engineering in college and looks forward to possibly returning to El Salvador with his family. In his spare time, he plays sports, does community service, and helps with home building projects.

"I want to develop my advocacy skills so that I can one day speak for others who cannot speak for themselves," Ismael shares.



CONCLUSION: OUR FIGHT CONTINUES

Echoing Nelson Mandela's belief that “poverty is not a task of charity but an act of justice,” the OCWB's role in the fight against poverty has been continuous. Our commitment to dismantling systemic inequities perpetuated by historical racism and oppression is central to our mission.

The past decade is a snapshot in time, reflecting the hard-won battles of those who came before us - champions who fought for the inherent right to thrive without barriers or consequences. As we stop to smell the roses of the approximate 6% decline in the poverty rate since our inception, we are reminded of just how much more work there is left to be done. We cannot rest until impacted communities experience the fruitfulness of a thriving community. As Anti-Poverty Advocates, we elevate the perspectives of residents whose voices continue to be muted by injustice, inequity and inadequate provisions. We take pride in framing our strategic objectives in response to their candid observations and honor their shared investment in this fight to end poverty. Yet, year after year, we are faced with the timeless question of just how the OCWB has contributed to the city's progress in the lofty goal of poverty eradication.

Primarily, our response includes the acknowledgement that poverty reduction is a complex endeavor that requires many variables to be fulfilled—from economic opportunity and educational enhancement to housing stability, increased healthcare access, and robustly-funded community support systems. These issues cannot be addressed in isolation; they require a holistic, multi-faceted approach that tackles the root causes of poverty. Though these reflections are irrefutable, the last decade has taught us that measuring and communicating our impact must be both quantitative and qualitative. For example,

- For every dollar invested by the OCWB, the community experienced a return on investment of \$4.25, and the same dollar yielded \$4.64 for the Commonwealth of Virginia. (OCWB Annual Report 2021) An estimated \$4 million in economic growth is the return on the city's investment via OCWB since 2014.
- Research estimates that employing individuals with felony records could boost the U.S. GDP by \$87 billion, annually (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2010). With the OCWB's third RRI cohort, the 30 returning citizens participating have access to workforce training for in-demand occupations with earning potential averaging \$30-\$70 per hour at entry level, depending on the industry. (Talent.com)
- The OCWB provides an average of 24,000 services to residents each year; this rate of service yielded earned wages and benefits for OCWB participants of \$9,189,559 in FY 21, alone.
- Our impact has been evident in how we have honored our communities' resilience, as they have forged ahead like Hector Vazquez, Kiki Ramos, Mecca Washington, Marilyn Joyner, Karen Imes, Saundra Laws, Cotina Brake, Kenyonna Reddick, Charles Avent, Nefertiti Wade, Michael Taylor, Heaven Smith, Warris Dudley, Jr., William Booker, Richard Fuller, Angela Long, Ismael Romero, Syah Bailey, Lakeisha Corthorn, and countless others.

The OCWB is steadfast in its commitment to ensure that every Richmond resident has the opportunity to build a life of dignity, equity, and success. We advocate for structural and sustainable policy investments through education, workforce development, and holistic support systems that empower individuals and families for the long term through programs like, guaranteed basic income, training and credentialing, eviction diversion, transportation advocacy, living wage certification, peer recovery support, food justice and more. The OCWB has designed a support network that addresses the immediate needs of those experiencing poverty and the broader social, economic, and systemic barriers that have perpetuated inequities for generations. Our fight continues!

APPENDIX: FY24 PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

WORKFORCE ADVOCACY & IMPACT



6,182

Units of Service
Delivered



275

of Enrolled Participants
in Workforce Programs



97

of Families Enrolled
in OCWB Programs



\$19.00

Average Starting
Wage for Participants



502

of Summer Youth
Work-Based Learning
Participants



377

of Service Hours
Completed by Youth
Empowerment
Council



33

of Students in
Youth Empowerment
Council



85

of Employer
Partners

RICHMOND RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

(RRI)



\$311K

Cash Payments
Received by RRI
Families



76

of Individuals
Receiving Guaranteed
Basic Income Payments



2,535

of Individuals
Served by RVA
Health Corps



3,391

of Individuals who
Received Peer Recovery
Support (RHOPES)

AMERICORPS

WEALTH BUILDING



3

of New
Homebuyers



290

of Wealth Building
Resource Recipients



43

of New Entrepreneurs
who Opened Businesses



3

of Known New
Vehicles Purchased

Reference

Data included on this page has been extracted from monthly reports, July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, compiled by the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building - Integrated Support division.

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