# Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative

The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative has made great strides since the completion of *Progress Report: A Roadmap to Change* in 2015 offered a bold new direction to address poverty. The report envisioned a comprehensive, integrated system of social supports that would empower families as they move out of poverty and into opportunities to succeed.

This report condensed input from a community-wide planning process into 33 recommendations aimed at tackling the dire issues of concentrated poverty in Rochester. It recommended a combination of evidence-based programs, policy changes, and addressing systemic barriers hindering economic opportunity. It prioritized systems transformation, launching adult mentorship, and expanding early childhood supports. Importantly, the report also challenged the diverse RMAPI stakeholders to think and act a differently, and to reflect on what they could contribute to solving the community-wide issue.
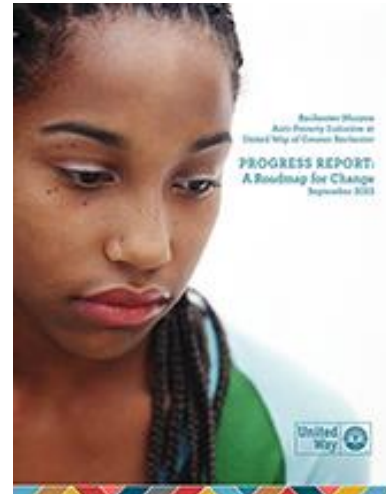
Thanks to the dedicated work of RMAPI and its partners, 2017 saw significant progress toward those goals as hundreds of individuals moved the community closer to the systemic change that will bring real poverty reduction. In the last year we saw the growth of initiatives that were born out of the initial recommendations in the 2015 progress report, evolved with the help of consulting firm FSG into a new governance structure, and made significant strides to addressing the root causes of poverty through the creation of five working groups.

RMAPI Accomplishments in 2017

The last year was a time of great evolution and progress for RMAPI as partners across the community moved forward together on anti-poverty goals. Below are some of the community's accomplishments during 2017:

Bridges to Success and Family Independence Initiative
The first implementation strategy from RMAPI addresses the need for mentoring services for individuals and families seeking to achieve economic self-sufficiency. There are two programs under the adult mentoring umbrella—Bridges to Success, which connects individuals to a professional mentor, and Family Independence Initiative, which connects families to a group of peers working together in creating change. Both approaches help participants identify socio-economic needs and develop a specialized plan of goals and action to achieve them.

By the end of 2017, there were **107** individuals enrolled in Bridges to Success and **151** enrolled in the Family Independence Initiative.

Early childhood funding
In July, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced **$4.75 million** in funding to support the expansion of early childhood anti-poverty initiatives as part of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. Funding will support new summer learning

programs, child care and home visiting services for children and caregivers in the city of Rochester pilot neighborhoods of EMMA, Beechwood and Marketview Heights.

The program initiatives include:

- $3 million to expand child care subsidies through Monroe County
- $1.075 million to expand the summerLEAP program
- $675,000 to expand home visitation programs Nurse-Family Partnership, Building Healthy Children and Parents as Teachers initiatives

Thanks to this funding, **300 children** were able to attend summer learning programs this year who otherwise would not have been able to enroll.

System integration work
RMAPI took a number of steps forward in creating the systemic change that will allow the community to reach its poverty-reduction goals. The working groups formed in 2017 are taking significant steps to bring together stakeholders from across the community, working together in new ways and developing person-centered approaches that will persist across sectors. The work with FSG also sharpened RMAPI's focus on its work to create systemic change.

As RMAPI moves into its next phase, the initiative will be shifting away from piloting and funding programs and redirecting this energy to influencing larger-scale systems and policy change. RMAPI plans to influence the policy, practice, and behavior throughout local systems and institutions. These changes will lead to incremental improvements at each point a person in poverty touches systems. Though alone each of these changes may be small, the sum of these improvements over time will be substantial.

Kiva Rochester
In an effort to promote local small businesses, this program provides zero percent interest crowdfunded loans to help entrepreneurs looking to start or grow a business. The City of Rochester's partnership with Kiva allows borrowers to receive loans of up to $10,000 from online lenders, and qualifying businesses are eligible to receive matching funds from the Rochester Economic Development Corporation. The city is also building a network of partner institutions and community members who can offer further help to these small businesses.

The program has awarded close to **$200,000 in loans** to local entrepreneurs. Of these borrowers, 75 percent would likely not be considered creditworthy at traditional financial institutions due to low credit scores, lacking collateral assets, and low incomes.

To date, 41 percent of the loans have gone to women-owned businesses and 78 percent have gone to African-American or Hispanic business owners.

Wage Disparity report
The Mayor's Office of Innovation completed an analysis of the local workforce in Monroe County with a focus on workers struggling to make ends meet. The report found that minorities, women, and people with disabilities face

disparities in pay and are over-represented among the county's lowest-paying industries. The study also found that minorities earn less than their white counterparts in nearly every industrial sector, and that wage gaps remain regardless of educational attainment.

Working closely with the RMAPI employment working group, the Mayor's Office of Innovation created a Part-Time Workers Survey to better understand the needs of this group and what can be done to help them achieve full-time employment. The employment working group will use the results of this survey to address roadblocks and encourage local employers to promote programs and practices that move people toward full-time employment.

RMAPI governance evolution
Starting in late 2016, RMAPI partnered with nationally recognized collective impact consulting firm FSG to formalize the scope, goals, and structure of the community anti-poverty effort. As a result of this work, RMAPI formalized its governance structure with co-chairs Rev. Marvin McMickle and Daan Braveman and a steering committee that expanded to 46 members, bringing wider representation along with new voices and perspectives into the effort.

Housing discrimination legislation
In June, Rochester City Council passed an ordinance banning landlord discrimination based on source of income, as previously many landlords outside low-income neighborhoods had not accepted Section 8 public housing vouchers. RMAPI is now advocating for this to be codified into state law and apply to landlords outside the Rochester city limits.

RMAPI Working Groups

The last year saw the creation of five new working groups that will drive the implementation and action of RMAPI's work. These groups—which include the data and evaluation working group, employment working group, service provision working group, policy working group, and funding alignment council—are tasked with increasing coordination by finding ways to realign existing programs, protocols, and stakeholders to work together differently to maximize efficiency.

The working groups will identify opportunities to start small with willing partners, learning from the experience and then expanding or replicating wherever possible. The groups will identify the resources required to put their ideas into action, inspire change within their own networks, and provide updates of their progress to the RMAPI steering committee and to the wider community.

Employment working group
The purpose of this group is to convene employment-related stakeholders to improve job stability and the earnings of people impacted by poverty in Rochester and Monroe County.

The employment working group is developing a pilot program to strengthen the employment talent pipeline through collaboration and feedback with education/job training programs, with a goal to result in the hiring of 50 low-income

individuals by December 2018. The program includes identifying the current and future job opening for employers and creating an analysis of where employers currently find their employees. Participants will then build a talent management pipeline.

Service provision working group

The purpose of this group is to connect and coordinate service provisions to deliver more effective, efficient, and person-centered outcomes.

Over the course of the next year, the service provision working group will conduct an environmental analysis and needs assessment, including a social service system-wide network map. The group will develop and/or expand a comprehensive directory of social supports that includes eligibility by program and agency, using this to facilitate hand-offs and navigation within and across agencies.

The group is also working to define and implement a process for common consent, intake, and data sharing across social service providers as well as a communication strategy that fosters buy-in among these providers. This work will fall in line with a "theory of change" developed by the working group that provides a roadmap for creating a more person-centered, data-driven system of delivering services.

Data and evaluation working group

The purpose of this group is to foster data-informed decision-making across RMAPI structures and ensure that shared measures are consistently collected and tracked.

The data and evaluation working group will establish a definition, baseline, and target for RMAPI's self-sufficiency goal and work in partnership with the RMAPI backbone staff to provide other working groups with data support as needed. The group has developed a dashboard that tracks changes in the poverty rate in Monroe County, the City of Rochester, and the RMAPI target area.

The group has also created a lexicon of common terms, which is a key tenet of the Results Based Accountability system. This lexicon creates simple and easy-to-understand definitions for the most commonly used terms, eliminating jargon and creating a language that can be shared by partners across the entire RMAPI collective. This lexicon also helps the public understand and follow the often complex work of creating systemic change.

Policy working group

The purpose of this group is to design more effective supports and benefits and to advocate for policies that support self-sufficiency.

The policy working group has set goals to support existing policy and advocacy "asks," including a continued push to prohibit housing discrimination based on economic groups (Section 8), supporting the NYS Public Transit Association's budget request to expand access of people impacted by poverty, supporting state budget requests for increased access to child care for more low-income working families.

The policy working group is supporting local efforts as well, including support for a more robust public transportation requirement as part of awards through the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council. The working group is also developing a local pilot program for monthly Earned Income Tax Credit payouts in a matched savings program and establishing a "Tacoma Program" tying increased housing funds to parents' long-term elementary school commitment and attendance.

Funding alignment council
The purpose of this group is to promote and facilitate alignment and coordination of public and private funders toward anti-poverty goals.

The funding alignment council will align the funders of poverty programs and strategies by increasing communication, enhancing learning, and gaining agreement on a shared data set to reduce data collection burden on grantees. The group will support the RMAPI backbone staff in setting a fundraising strategy and implementation plan, which includes researching new funding options for RMAPI.

The council will also map current funding sources and the flow of funding into the community related to poverty reduction, building funder capacity around the RMAPI guiding principles, and identifying more opportunities to bring private or public dollars to poverty reduction work.

RMAPI in 2018 and Beyond

While proud of its pilot program and policy successes over the last two years since the release of *Progress Report: A Roadmap to Change*, RMAPI is refocusing energies on driving systemic change in the coming years. Instead of attempting to treat symptoms of poverty through programs alone, this systemic change will address root causes and structural barriers perpetuating poverty, creating more sustainable impact on a larger scale.

As RMAPI enters this new phase, the initiative is shifting focus away from piloting and funding programs and redirecting this energy to influencing larger-scale systems and policy change. While it will continue to monitor and support ongoing pilot initiatives, it became apparent that even when brought to scale, early programs would not move the needle on poverty in a significant way. This is a lesson learned from the first phase of RMAPI's existence, a notion supported by the IBM Smarter Cities challenge report. IBM defined Rochester as program rich, but outcomes poor, and found that Rochester would never solve its poverty problem by funding programs alone. We must address the root causes of poverty rather than treating the symptoms more effectively.

In contrast, RMAPI plans to influence the policy, practice, and behavior throughout local systems and institutions. These changes will lead to incremental improvements at each point a person in poverty touches systems. Though alone each of these changes may be small, the sum of these improvements over time will be substantial.

Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative

In the coming phase, RMAPI will focus on enabling sustainable employment, connecting and coordinating service provision, designing and advocating for effective benefits and policies, and ensuring learning and data-driven action. RMAPI will also equip individuals and organizations with awareness, tools and practices to address trauma, combat structural racism, and build community assets.

With the determined work of the diverse RMAPI stakeholders and a dedication to change ways of thinking about poverty and create new and more effective systems to address its root causes, RMAPI will achieve these objectives and reach the goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent in 15 years.

RMAPI Goal: Reduce poverty in Monroe County by 50 percent in 15 years

50%

THE INITIAL FIVE STRATEGIES RMAPI WILL IMPLEMENT

| Connect and coordinate service provision | Enable sustainable employment | Design and advocate for effective benefits and policies | Ensure learning and data-driven action |

Guiding Principles: Equip individuals and organizations with awareness, tools and practices to address trauma, combat structural racism and build community assets.

Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative Timeline

2015

Published "Progress Report: A Roadmap for Change"
Report compiled the findings of working groups formed to study key drivers of poverty, setting a roadmap and issuing 33 recommend-dations for addressing poverty.

Selection of Target Neighborhoods
In partnership with the City of Rochester's Office of Innovation, RMAPI identified three areas to pilot its work. These neighborhoods had the highest density of poverty, but strong community assets.

IBM Smarter Cities Challenge Report
Report outlines threats and opportunities impacting Rochester.

2016

Guiding Principles Report
Aligned and coordinated community around shared values.

Adult Mentoring Programs
First strategy from RMAPI addressed the need for mentoring services for individuals and families seeking to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Two programs, Bridges to Success, and Family Independence Initiative are under this umbrella.

2017

Community Advisory Council
RMAPI created the first county-wide resident-driven leadership table in partnership with other community collaboratives to ensure community voice and representation at all levels of decision-making.

RMAPI Expands Backbone Staff

Wage Disparities Report Published

ESPRI Contract Narrative: Phase II summary to State.

RMAPI Working Groups Established
to drive system integration across sectors.

U.S. Census Data Shows Poverty Decline

Early Childhood Funding
Gov. Cuomo announced $4.75M in funding, allowing summer learning program to immediately expand by 300 students.

FSG Engagement and Implementation

2018

RMAPI Enters Phase II
Creating systematic change by shifting focus away from piloting and redirecting its energy to policy, practice and behavior throughout local systems and institutions.