

SFY 2021 Ujamaa Place Equity Direct Appropriation

Final Report

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Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
Employment and Training Programs Division

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## Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature appropriated $475,000 ($500,000 minus $25,000 for DEED administration) in [2019 Minnesota 1st Special Session Laws, Chapter 7, House File 2, Section 2, Subdivision 3 (cc)](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2019/1/Session+Law/Chapter/7/) for SFY 21 to Ujamaa Place, an organization focused on eliminating barriers facing young African-American men (ages 18 through 30) to become stable, productive members of society. The funds were allocated to develop programs in seven areas: housing; education, employment, behavioral health and wellness, cultural services, criminal justice advocacy, and support services (e, g bus tokens, legal assistance, laundry, transportation, scholarships, stipends, etc.),

These programs are part of Ujamaa Place’s overall system of serving the “Ujamaa Man,” whose enrollment into the “The Theory of Transformation” programming results in a “transformative empowering experience” of mentoring young African-American men on navigating inequality, poverty, and the criminal justice system. Each enrolled participant has an individual transformational plan designed to meet the stabilization needs of each man at time of enrollment. In accordance with legislation, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has taken $25,000 (five percent) from the appropriation to cover administrative costs associated with the grant.

Ujamaa Place focuses on the elimination of barriers facing young African-American men in St. Paul (between the ages of 18 and 30), most of whom suffer multiple obstacles to obtaining stability. These barriers include:

* Lack of adequate education;
* Unemployment and/or unemployable;
* Gang affiliation;
* Criminal history;
* Homelessness;
* Drug use; and
* Societal marginalization

The organization addresses an issue identified throughout the country, i.e. the systematic, cultural, and political under-utilization of African-American men, particularly in the area of gainful employment. While overall unemployment has dropped in Minnesota, there has not been the case for African American men, especially for the population served at Ujamaa Place.

As a requirement of the appropriation, Ujamaa Place is to provide programs in the following areas:

* Job training;
* Employment preparation;
* Internships;
* Education;
* Training in the construction trades;
* Housing; and
* Organizational capacity building

It took Ujamaa Place approximately four years to make the shift to a data-centric organization. Today, Ujamaa high-context coaches use data to support Ujamaa men throughout their transformation journey. Ujamaa coaches track all activities, tasks, milestones and services used in the ClientTrack data system that is customized to measure performance based on completion of program requirements outlined in each participant’s Individual Transformation Plan (ITP).

Ujamaa Place prepares its participants to enter the workforce through mock interviewing, cover letter and resume building, topic discussions, guest speakers, employment partner tours (i.e. EcoLab, 3M, White Bear Lake Superstore, MN State Fair), and job certification training in construction, automotive, welding, forklift, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and more.

Once participants are mentally ready to work (as unhealed trauma is a barrier to unemployment for many of the Ujamaa men), they can access the following offerings: job fair visits, job application assistance, transportation assistance to get to and from interviews, reference letters, professional attire for interviews, and miscellaneous expense support, i.e., cell phone to communicate with potential employers.

Thanks to its employment partners, Ujamaa Place also offers in-house interviews (employers on- site conducting interviews with the Ujamaa men). Once participants secure employment, Ujamaa Place continues to support them to help them be successful and retain their jobs, such as transportation assistance, clothing assistance, and miscellaneous expense support.

## Summary of Goals and Objectives Presented in the Work Plan

The funding supports Ujamaa Place’s Theory of Transformation program. This component, delivered within a community environment, assists young black men with almost no income or job training to develop employment capability and life skills essential for self-sufficiency and life stability. The program has a clear focus on work-entry programming, specific skills training, employment retention, and personal financial management. Most of the participants involved in Ujamaa Place have been incarcerated for five years or more.

Most participants are unemployed or underemployed and have not held a consistent job due to housing instability or incarceration. Securing and retaining a job is a critical step in the transformation journey. Ujamaa Place helps its participants secure and retain jobs through program activities, services, support, and job certification training.

Ujamaa Place recognizes there are systemic barriers along the journey of stabilization for Ujamaa men that are:

* Repeated chronic bouts of homelessness;
* Unemployment;
* Low wages;
* Trauma-related illnesses within the family that trigger a negative effect on youth, many of which result in criminal justice involvement; and
* Areas of Concentrated Poverty that are a major societal health concern.

Ujamaa Place provides job training classes preparing participants, most of whom have never held a full-time job or have been disconnected from the job market for a considerable period, to enter the workforce. These interactive classes allow participants to learn best practices in filling out job applications, building resumes, and answering questions from potential employers about their criminal past. In addition, the classes help participants obtain all necessary work documents.

Ujamaa Place offers employment certification classes to Ujamaa men at no charge. These classes help the men gain critical skills that create pathways preparing the men for living wage employment opportunities. Currently, the certification training programs consist of:

* Neighborhood Development Center (NDC), where students participate in Entrepreneurship and Business training
* Employment development and training certification in Construction, Automotive, Forklift, Welding and Culinary and Cultural Financial Literacy lead to valuable employment, apprenticeships, paid internships, and careers in Twin Cities Fortune 500 corporations i.e. Target and 3M, in addition to local employment partners who provide second chance to Ujamaa Men to fulfil jobs that are important to their bottom line.
* The immersion of Cultural Financial Literary into all Ujamaa Theory of Transformation programming has enabled Ujamaa men to understand the history of economics and banking that began with slavery in America. Cultural Financial Literacy training plays a major role in teaching the men the real-time value of their skills, time and labor, which results in increased wages. Employment data remains a key performance metric in the stability of Ujamaa men enrolled in the T of T.
* A historical look at the unemployment rates shows a turbulent employment year for Ujamaa men:
  + Q4 2020: The unemployment rate had a 39% increase to 76%, with an hourly wage of $14.25.
  + Q1 2021: The unemployment rate had a 12% decrease in Q1 2021 to 64%, with an hourly wage of $14.99.
  + Q2 2021: The unemployment rate had a 16% increase in Q2 2021 to 80%, with an hourly wage of $17.73.
  + Q3 2021: The unemployment rate had a 5% decrease in Q3 2021 to 75%, with an hourly wage of $13.85 (22% drop) from Q2 ($17.73).

In 2021, Ujamaa advocated for a living wage from its employment partners. The below lists show some of the employment partners and the hourly wage paid to Ujamaa men, up significantly from previous years.

Science Museum of MN ($18)

Westrock ($23)  
Kiser ($20)  
Wendy’s ($18)

WAlmart ($17.50)  
AaCron Aluminum Anodizing ($15)

H & B Welding ($16)

While every step forward for Ujamaa men is celebrated, the wage increases cannot offset the instability of the short term and seasonal jobs that are offered to our men. The men obtain work as it comes. The increase in unemployment caused great alarm, as negative employment figures impact the mental health of the men and their families. The increase in unemployment was a result of layoffs from businesses impacted by COVID-19. A significant number of the Ujamaa men reported their hours being drastically reduced. Ujamaa Place responded by partnering with Ramsey County, OJP and the City of St. Paul to provide stipends for increased employment development, training and internships.

Ujamaa Place partners that have given Ujamaa men a second chance and have served as training and employment partners include:

* Minnesota State Fair
* Bob and Steve's Auto World
* Abra Auto
* Anagram International
* Pearson's Candies
* Fresh Express
* Panera
* U.S. Bank Vikings Stadium
* House of Hope Church
* OMG Media Solutions
* Urban City Construction
* Ecolab
* Cut Fresh Foods
* Carlson Building Mgt.
* Emerge
* Shoe Away Hunger
* Take Action MN
* UPS
* FEDEX
* CareerForce
* Better Futures
* MN Voice
* White Bear Lake Superstore
* Asia Peso Security
* Neighborhood Development Center;
* St. Paul College;
* J.L. Griffis Twin Cities Schools;

Ujamaa Place is a catalyst for change. It is a mechanism for serving societal needs and a solution for a long-term community problem. Ujamaa Place has increased its organizational capacity to enhance its effectiveness and program quality in response to serving African American men surrounded by multiple racial disparities. A key pillar in the Theory of Transformation program model is a focus on education. In 2021, the data reported 21% of participants enrolled were high school dropouts, 53% had a GED and 20% had some college education. The data reveals the direct correlation of level of education obtained to homelessness.

## Data Elements and Performance Indicators Being Collected and Reported

Ujamaa Place data is analyzed on a quarterly basis. Success is measured in five ultimate outcomes. They are:

* Stable Housing Situation
* Increased Educational Attainment
* Securing/Retaining Employment
* Connection with Family/Children
* Eliminating Contact with the Criminal Justice System

Ujamaa’s data shows that:

* Ujamaa men enrolled are unemployed, homeless and have a connection to the criminal justice system.
* There is a direct correlation between level of education attained and homelessness.
* 21% of the men enrolled do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.
* Ujamaa men test at a 4th – 8th grade reading, writing and math academic level at the time of enrollment.
* 100% of the men enrolled enter with basic skills deficiency.
* 17% were in the foster care system.

## Effect of COVID-19 on Ujamaa Place’s Activities

Ujamaa Place continues to operate in a hybrid model (virtual / on-site programming) due to the on-going challenges of the pandemic.

**Theory of Transformation Programming**

Ujamaa high context coaches remain steadfast in their commitment to help the men navigate the many barriers that continue to weigh on their psychological and physical well-being. Systemic poverty, housing instability, unemployment, substance abuse and trauma-related illnesses must be addressed to stabilize the men to maintain employment.

Summer programming was modified to increase one-one mentoring and coaching based on the increased trauma resulting from the prolonged pandemic and discontinuation of pandemic stimulus. Systemic poverty, housing instability, unemployment, substance abuse and trauma-related illnesses have increased during the pandemic.

The biggest challenge was the government stimulus provided a false safety net for the men, which they relied too heavily on, which is a result of living in systemic poverty. In addition, addressing trauma-related illness is an on-going challenge for the men. The Theory of Transformation’s services are used to address these critical challenges to support the stabilization journey that men and coaches created to transform their lives. The fear, misinformation and mistrust of vaccinations continues in the community causing disruption and isolation in a community that thrives on being a brotherhood. Trauma-related illnesses are triggered at an all-time high. Ujamaa had to adapt a model of one-one counseling with the men across all pillars of the Theory of Transformation.

## Participant Data

The grant period for SFY 2021 funds ran from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021. The participant data for this period is below:

### Demographic Data

| **Participants Served** | | **Q4 2020** | **Q1 2021** | **Q2 2021** | **Q3 2021** | **TOTAL** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | A. Male | 287 | 236 | 287 | 271 | 1081 |
| B. Female | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Age** | A. 14 - 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| B. 16 – 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C. 18 – 20 | 35 | 23 | 31 | 30 | 119 |
| D. 21 – 22 | 16 | 29 | 33 | 34 | 112 |
| E. 23 – 24 | 48 | 31 | 45 | 37 | 161 |
| F. 25 – 30 | 188 | 153 | 178 | 170 | 689 |
| **Ethnicity / Race** | A. Hispanic/Latino | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| B. American Indian or Alaska Native | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| C. Asian | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| D. Multi-Racial | 17 | 20 | 20 | 17 | 74 |
| E. Black or African American | 265 | 214 | 263 | 252 | 994 |
|
| F. White | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Education Level** | A. 8th grade and under | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 9 |
|
| B. 9th Grade – 12th Grade | 64 | 49 | 59 | 55 | 227 |
|
| C. High School graduate or equivalent | 127 | 96 | 123 | 136 | 482 |
|
| D. GED | 37 | 34 | 36 | 27 | 134 |
| E. Unknown | 0 | 5 | 14 | 3 | 22 |
| F. Post-Secondary Education | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 11 |
| G. Some College | 55 | 46 | 48 | 47 | 196 |
|
| **Other Demographics** | A. Limited English Proficient | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| B. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance | 30 | 30 | 30 | 16 | 106 |
| C. Foster Youth | 58 | 42 | 48 | 46 | 194 |
| D. Youth with a Disability | 43 | 31 | 36 | 30 | 140 |
| E. High School Drop-Out | 64 | 49 | 59 | 55 | 227 |
|
| F. Youth Offender | 115 | 155 | 251 | 100 | 621 |
|
| G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth | 77 | 92 | 139 | 155 | 463 |
| H. Basic Skills Deficient | 287 | 236 | 287 | 271 | 1081 |
| I. Homeless or Runaway Youth | 68 | 169 | 128 | 170 | 535 |
|
| J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment | 219 | 151 | 230 | 202 | 802 |
|
| K. Veteran | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 18 |
|

### Program Services, Activities, and Other Related Assistance

| **Participants Served** | **Q4 2020** | | **Q1 2021** | **Q2 2021** | **Q3 2021** | **TOTAL** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A. Received Education or Job Training Activities | | 116 | 111 | 127 | 119 | 473 |
|
| B. Received Work Experience Activities | | 75 | 94 | 125 | 89 | 383 |
| C. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities | | 55 | 47 | 43 | 49 | 194 |
| D. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities | | 0 | 3 | 0 | 30 | 33 |
|
| E. Received Mentoring Activities | | 158 | 138 | 129 | 137 | 562 |
|
| F. Received Support Services | | 158 | 138 | 129 | 137 | 562 |
|

### Indicators of Performance

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participants Served** | **Q4 2020** | | **Q1 2021** | **Q2 2021** | **Q3 2021** | **TOTAL** |
| A. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals | | 29 | 31 | 12 | 10 | 82 |
| B. Received Academic Credit or Service Learning Credit | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Dropout – Returned to School | | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| D. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, Military, Job Search or Employment | | 0 | 4 | 0 | 14 | 18 |

## Expenditure Data

Ujamaa Place expenditures from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021:

| Budget Category | Expenditures |
| --- | --- |
| Administration (up to 10% allowed) | $47,500 |
| Contracted Services (construction training) | $31,000 |
| Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits | $45,000 |
| Direct Staff Services | $205,000 |
| Support Services | $146,500 |
| Total | $475,000 |

## Wilder Research Study

In 2020, Ujamaa Place partnered with Wilder Research to learn about the experiences of men in their programs (“Ujamaa men”) related to COVID-19, police brutality, and the social unrest following  
the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers. The majority of Ujamaa men are Black and underemployed, so they have a higher likelihood of experiencing police brutality and being negatively affected by COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Graham et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2020). This study illuminates the ways in which Ujamaa men have been affected by these health and safety crises, with a particular focus on their experience as Black men, some with a criminal background, who are systemically barred from numerous income generation opportunities.

Wilder Research completed nine semi-structured interviews with Ujamaa men in November and December 2020. Five out of nine respondents said they have been an Ujamaa man for more than a year; the other respondents had been attending Ujamaa Place programming for a few months.

The interview protocol that Wilder used during the interview was developed in consultation with Ujamaa Place. Ujamaa Place selected program participants to be interview respondents and provided Wilder staff with their contact information to schedule interviews. Interview respondents received an incentive from Ujamaa Place as a thank you for their participation. The findings were published in the 2020 Annual Data Report available to download at: <https://ujamaaplace.org/data-storytelling/>

## Future Allocations

Ujamaa Place’s SFY 2022 appropriation is $400,000 ($380,000 for Ujamaa Place; $20,000 for DEED administration).