Greater New Orleans
Community Data Center
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Strengthening Our Workforce from Within:

Adult Education's Role in Furthering Economic Growth in Greater New Orleans

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Summary

Today's adult workers need a broader and stronger set of skills than they have in the past, and they must continually update their skills if they are to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies and industries. Literacy skills—including reading, writing, numeracy, and computer skills—are the foundational skills workers need to respond to this changing environment. And soft skills, including social skills and work habits, are becoming increasingly important as many jobs require direct interactions with consumers or teamwork to solve complex problems.

Two recent studies from the Brookings Institution found that there is a gap between the skills required by jobs (including job openings) in the New Orleans metro and the skills supplied by the metro labor pool. Improvement of K-12 education is essential in addressing this problem—but will take decades to fully take effect. For example, in New Orleans, even if there's a significant in-migration of young professionals, fully two-thirds of the city's 2025 labor pool will be adults who are already working-age New Orleanians—well past the reach of K-12 schools.

The best available data suggests that 27 percent of New Orleans' current working-age population are low-skilled and likely low-literate. While New Orleans has a smaller share of low-skilled working-age adults than cities like Memphis and Detroit, New Orleans has a significantly larger share of low-skilled adults than cities like Raleigh and Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile, the New Orleans regional economy continues to shift toward knowledge-based industries with middle- and high-skilled jobs projected to account for over half of all job openings by 2020. Strengthening and targeting workforce development efforts toward current job openings and growth industries will be key to reducing the region's current and future skills gap.

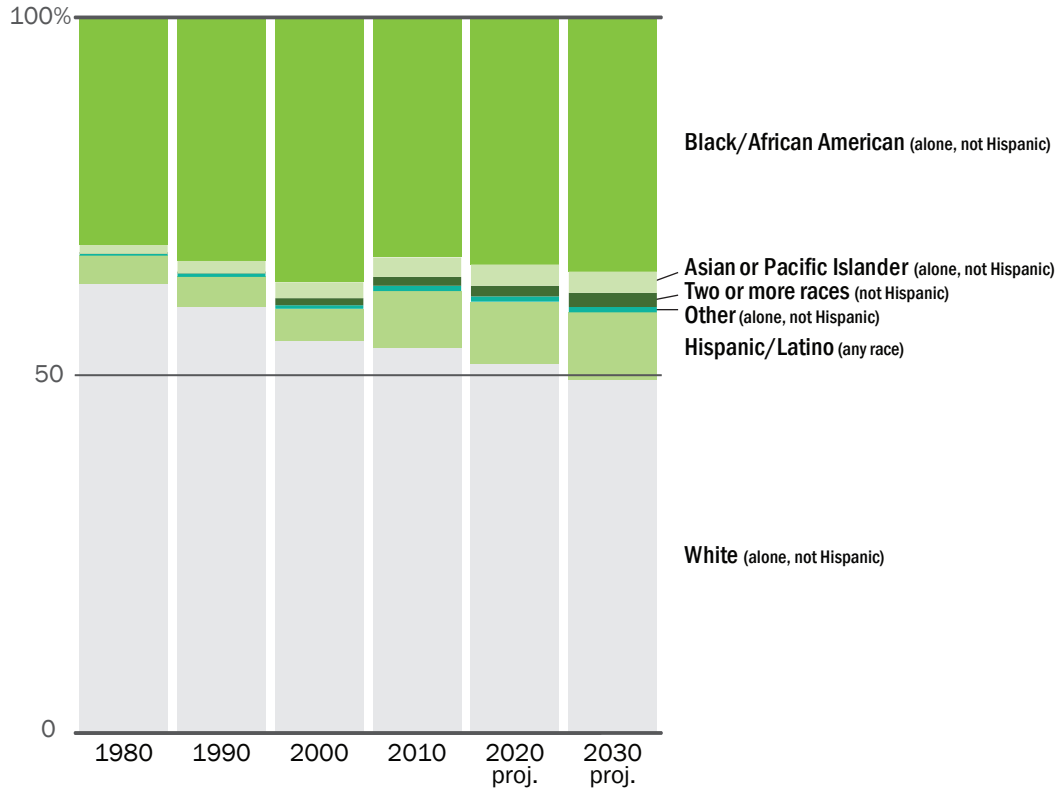
High level economic development leadership can bring together employers in emerging industry clusters with education institutions, training providers, support service providers, and Workforce Investment Boards to identify and solve specific workforce challenges. Importantly, these industry-led alliances can advocate for new ways to make use of a broader range of funding streams to accomplish their goals. With shrinking government coffers, it will take pooling of more flexible dollars to address workforce training needs. Importantly, this work will require a sustained leadership commitment, because there are no quick fixes. Other regions have recognized the importance of making workforce skill building among their highest priorities with impressive results. There is no doubt that New Orleanians, working together, can accomplish the same.

"Today's workers must continually update their skills if they are to adapt to rapidly evolving industries."

Background

In recent years economists have documented that metropolitan areas with higher rates of bachelor's degree attainment also have higher rates of job growth.[1] Thus, many policy makers have focused on growing the number of workers with a bachelor's degree. Indeed, our preceding analysis emphasized that in order to build a strong economy in the New Orleans metro, it is vital to increase post-secondary degree attainment (associate's degree and higher), especially among minorities.[2] After all, minorities will be the majority of the New Orleans metro workforce by 2030 (even if we have no net in-migration), and minorities are already the majority of children coming up through our school system.[3]

Population counts and projections by race/ethnicity
New Orleans metro



Source: GNOCDC analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census and authors' projections.

Although job and wage prospects in the U.S. are best for high-skilled occupations, there is still a preponderance of jobs that are available to workers with less than a bachelor's degree. In fact, economists have documented that economic competitiveness requires more than just training a larger group of highly skilled individuals—it requires raising the basic skill levels of the entire population, including adults already in the workforce.[4]

Today's adult workers need a broader and stronger set of skills than they have in the past, and they need to continually update their skills if they are to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies and industries.[5] Literacy skills—including reading, writing, numeracy, and computer skills—are the foundational skills workers need to contribute productively in most occupations.[6] Importantly, workers whose jobs have disappeared as our economy changes need these foundational skills to adapt and learn new occupational skills. And soft skills, including social skills and work habits, are becoming increasingly important as many jobs require direct interactions with consumers

or teamwork to solve complex problems. In fact, employers have found that these soft skills are often more important in the workplace than academic skills.[7]

At any given level of education (including high school dropouts), researchers have found that employment, wages, and wage growth all rise with increased literacy skills.[8] In other words, regardless of their education level or history, adults need strong abilities in reading, writing, numeracy, and computer skills—also known as "literacy proficiency"—to be employable and productive participants in the economy. In turn, businesses need employees with high literacy proficiency to be more productive and competitive.[9] Thus, in regions with low adult literacy rates, basic adult education services, including literacy training, are key contributors to a sustainable and robust economy.

Literacy = reading, writing, numeracy, and computer skills.

Studies have found that public investments in basic adult education provide a return on investment in the form of increased consumption and new tax collections from a more educated workforce.[10] At the same time, literacy investments have been demonstrated to lower crime rates and improve health outcomes, thus lowering taxpayer expenditures on public safety and health care.[11,12] Finally, improving parents' ability to read to their children and help with their homework has a direct and positive effect on their children's education, and has been demonstrated to increase the educational achievement of children.[13]

In this report, we assess the extent to which low adult literacy rates remain a drag on the greater New Orleans economy, whether changing demographics post-Katrina have increased the overall skill level in the metro's labor pool, the extent to which improvements in K-12 education will be sufficient to address workforce development needs in the future, and additional efforts that may be needed to optimize the productivity of our workforce.

Key terms

What is basic adult education?

In this report, we use the term "basic adult education services," which includes adult literacy training, General Educational Development (GED) preparation, and English language services.[14] These services are supported by isolated pockets of federal funding, including Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, and charitable giving. A variety of local entities offer basic adult education services, including K-12 districts, community colleges, and community-based organizations.[15]

Educational attainment as a proxy for adult literacy?

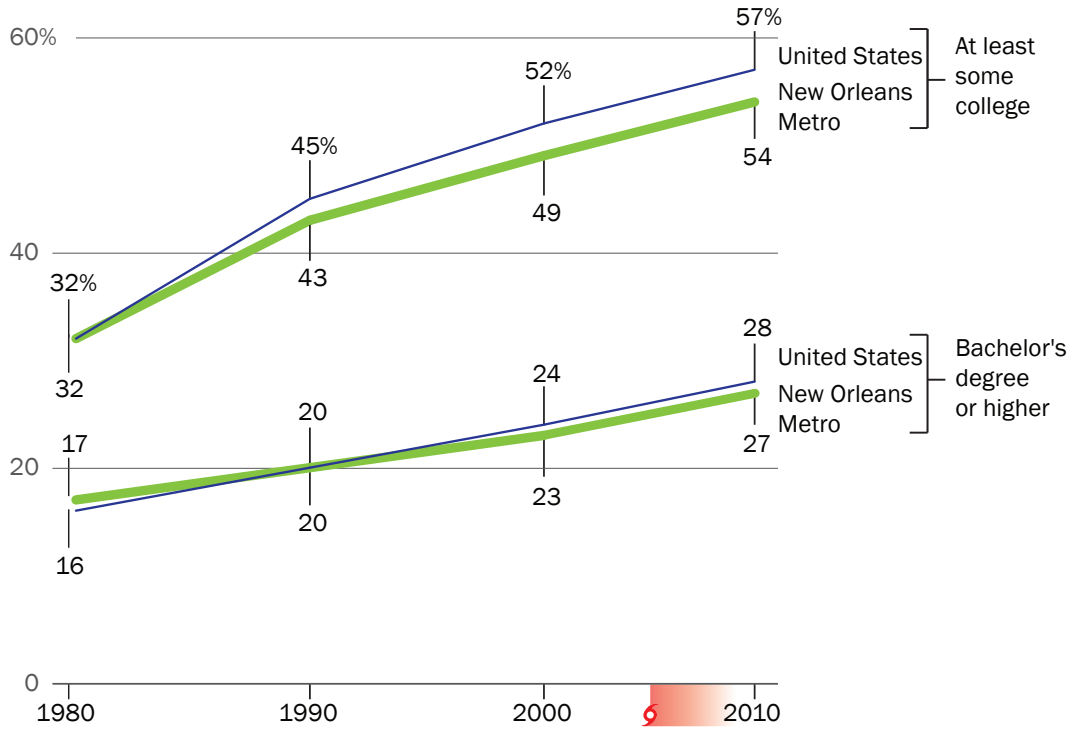
Throughout this report we use educational attainment as a proxy for low literacy. Certainly many high school graduates lack literacy skills, and failing to finish high school is not a direct indicator of one's literacy levels. However, actual measures of adult literacy rates are scarce. Assessing a region's adult literacy rate cannot be done simply by asking people how literate they are. It must be done through actual testing and, as such, is very expensive. The last time such testing occurred was in 2003.[16] The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) estimated that 18 percent of adults in Orleans Parish lacked "basic" prose literacy skills—meaning they could perform no more than the most rudimentary literacy tasks.[17] (Examples of prose literacy activities include reading and understanding a newspaper article, an instruction manual, or a brochure.[18]) However, there is substantial literature that indicates that low literacy is highly correlated with low educational attainment.[19] In this report we focus on three specific language and educational attainment indicators that serve as proxies for low literacy skills. They are 1) adults 18-64 with no high school diploma, 2) adults 18-64 with no more education than a high school diploma, living below 200 percent of poverty, and not enrolled in school currently, and 3) adults 18-64 who speak English poorly or not all, and have a high school diploma or less. [For a helpful tutorial on identifying and using proxies see "You Can't Always Get What You Want" at http://www.gnocdc.org/articles/corrdata.html]

The New Orleans metro currently has a skills gap.

Greater New Orleans is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based economy. Since 1980, the industrial drivers of our regional economy have shifted from those requiring less education (such as tourism, oil and gas, and food manufacturing) to those requiring more education (such as higher education, medical research and training, business services, and motion picture).[20] Moreover, in recent years, state, regional and city economic development leaders have aligned to develop new knowledge-based industries such as water management, ultra-deep water oil exploration, bio-innovation, and digital media.[21]

Certainly, educational attainment rates have increased in the New Orleans metro[22] since 2000 —in part due to an influx of young professionals,[23] in part due to the inability of many pre-Katrina residents with lower levels of education to return,[24] and perhaps in part due to educational achievements of our local population. Nonetheless, these gains have not kept up with national gains, and evidence suggests that our metro continues to have a shortage of skilled workers.

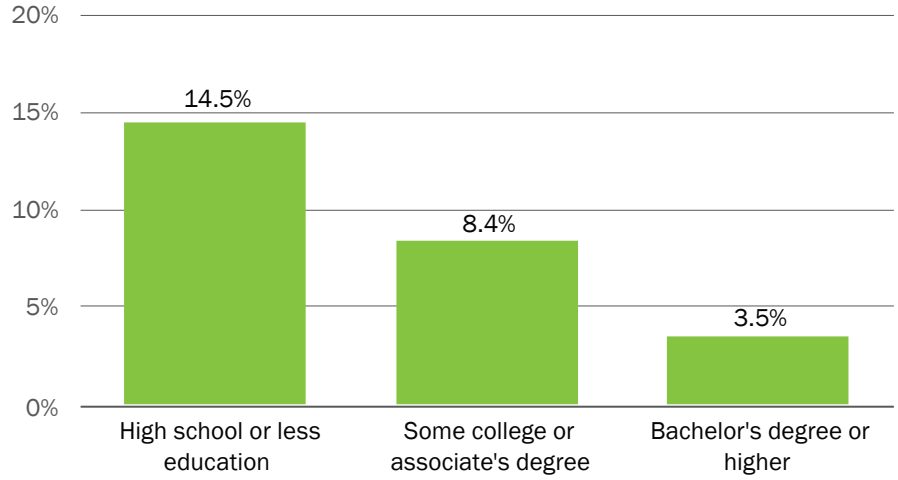
Educational attainment
for the population 25 years and older



Sources: GNOCDC analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, and American Community Survey 2010.

Researchers at the Brookings Institution found a mismatch between the skills required by jobs in the New Orleans metro and the skills supplied by the New Orleans metro labor pool. They found that the years of education required by the average job in the New Orleans metro increased rapidly from 13.28 in 2005 to 13.44 in 2009, and the average adult 25 years and older in the metro had attained only about 13.32 years of education in 2009.[25] In a more recent study, based on data from advertised online job openings during January and February 2012, Brookings found the average job vacancy in the metro required 14 years of education, or the equivalent of two years of college or an associate's degree.

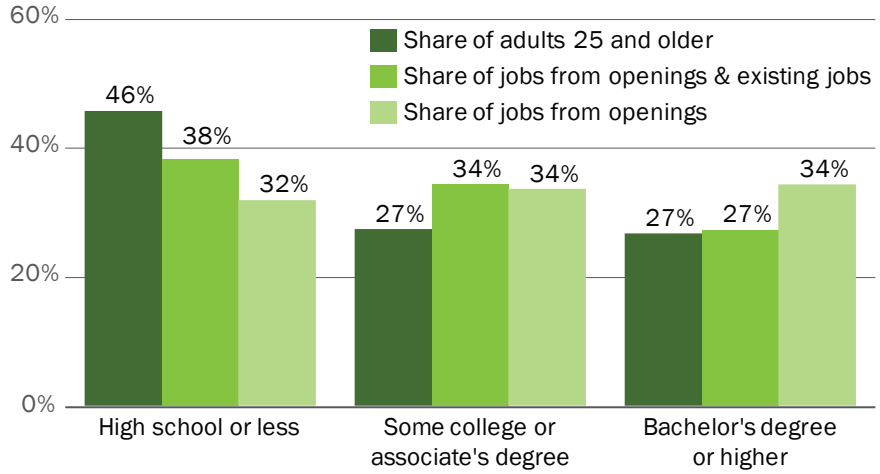
Unemployment rate by educational attainment, 2010
New Orleans metro



Source: Rothwell, J. (2012). Education, Job Openings, and Unemployment in Metropolitan America. Brookings: Washington, D.C.

Unemployment rates by educational attainment also point to a likely mismatch between the skills of available workers and the skills demanded by our emerging knowledge economy. In the New Orleans metro, workers with a high school diploma or less had an unemployment rate of 14.5 percent in 2010, compared to 8.4 percent for workers with some college or associate's degree, and 3.5 percent for workers with a bachelor's degree. In particular, these unemployment rates suggest the New Orleans metro has an oversupply of low-skilled labor. Brookings found that while 46 percent of the New Orleans metro population 25 years and older had a high school diploma or less, only 32 percent of jobs advertised are available for workers with that level of education, and only 38 percent of all jobs—vacancies and existing jobs—are available to these workers. The opposite is true for adults with a Bachelor's degree or higher. While 34 percent of metro area job openings require at least a Bachelor's degree, only 27 percent of the adult population has attained a Bachelor's degree. Moreover, the skills gap in the New Orleans metro will likely worsen as the regional economy continues to shift toward knowledge-based industries.[26]

Share of adults 25 and older, job openings, and existing jobs by level of education
New Orleans metro



Source: Rothwell, J. (2012). Education, Job Openings, and Unemployment in Metropolitan America. Brookings: Washington, D.C.

The Enigma of New Orleans

Examining standard educational attainment indicators, one might conclude that New Orleanians have higher educational levels than the nation or metro. The city has a greater share of the working-age population with a bachelor's degree or higher (30 percent compared to 27 percent nationally and 25 percent across the metro), and an equal or lower share with a high school degree or less (approximately 41 percent for both the city and the nation, and 43 percent across the metro). Although Brookings did not conduct a skills gap analysis for New Orleans itself (because jobs and workers are pooled across metro areas rather than isolated within cities), Brookings found that unemployment rates were lower in areas with a sufficient supply of educated workers and a smaller skills gap. Here lies the enigma of New Orleans: with a highly educated labor market, one might assume New Orleans would enjoy lower unemployment rates. Yet, despite the concentration of high-skilled adults in the city, it has had persistently high unemployment rates. Unemployment in New Orleans was roughly equivalent to the national unemployment rate in 2011 at 8.8 percent, and it exceeded the metro area unemployment rate by more than a percentage point. In fact, the unemployment rate in New Orleans has consistently exceeded the metro's unemployment rate since 1990.[27]

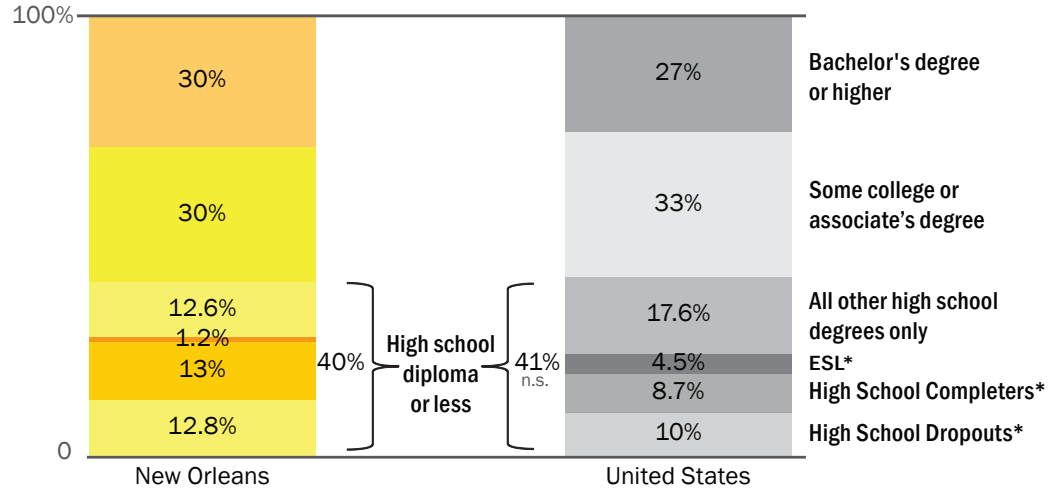
If New Orleans boasts greater shares of working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or more, and equivalent or smaller shares of working adults with a high school diploma or less, why does New Orleans suffer from higher unemployment rates? A more refined analysis of those adults with a high school degree or less may provide the answer to this question. The National Commission on Adult Literacy points to three subgroups of the population, with a high school degree or less, that are likely to lack literacy proficiency.[28] The three groups are:

1. High school dropouts: Defined as adults 18-64 with no high school diploma (or GED) [who are not ESL].

2. High school completers: Defined as adults 18-64 with no more education than a high school diploma (or GED), living below 200 percent of the federally defined poverty level, and not enrolled in school currently [who are not ESL].[29]

3. English as a second language (ESL) learners: Defined as adults 18-64 who speak English poorly or not all, and have a high school diploma (or GED) or less.

Share of working-age population by educational attainment and low-skilled target groups, 2008-10 (three-year average)

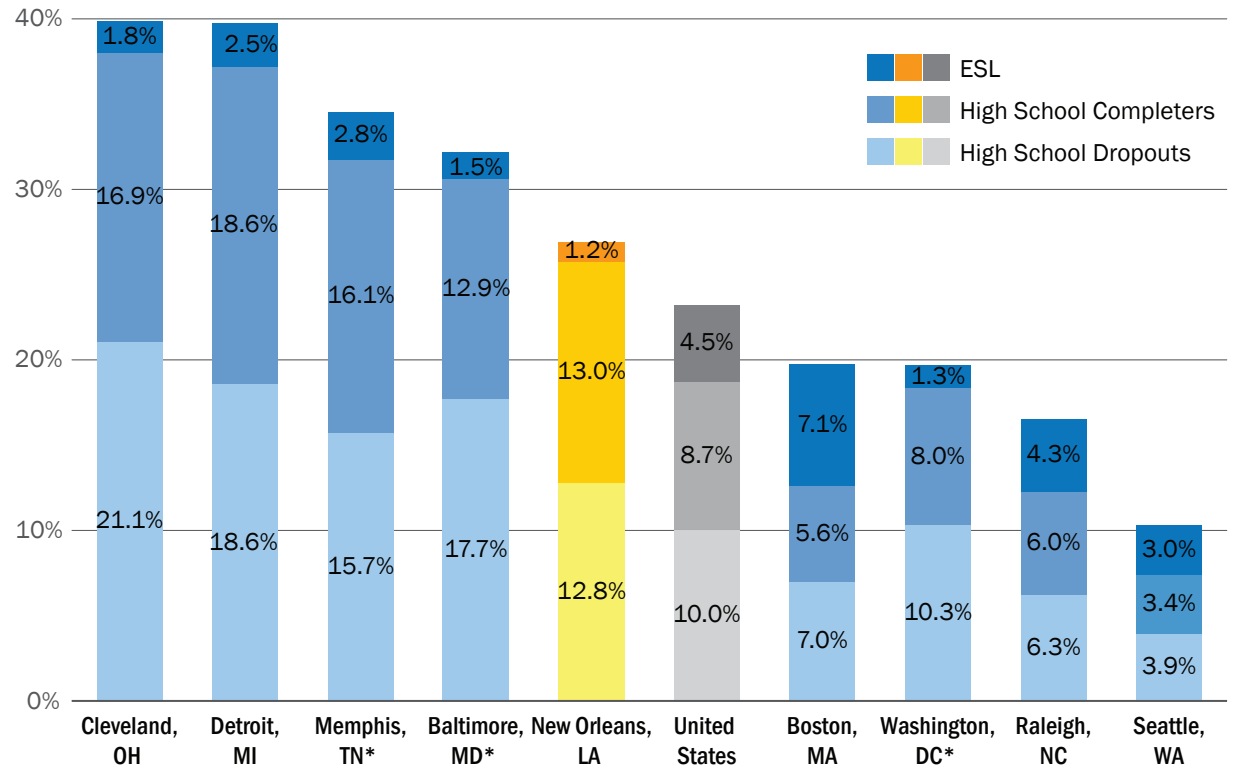


n.s.= Difference between U.S. and New Orleans is not significant at 95% confidence interval.
Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-10.
**Low-skilled subgroups of the population with a high school diploma or less who likely lack literacy proficiency.*

Although both the U.S. and New Orleans have about 40 percent of the working-age population with a high school degree or less, this more refined analysis reveals that New Orleans' working-age population is indeed lower-skilled. In New Orleans, high school dropouts and high-school completers are 12.8 and 13.0 percent of the 18-64 population, respectively, compared to only 10.0 percent and 8.7 percent of the U.S. working-age population, respectively. All total, the low-skilled population is about 27 percent of the working-age population of New Orleans compared to 23 percent nationally. On the flip side, 18 percent of the U.S. working-age population has a high school degree and basic literacy skills, whereas in New Orleans only 13 percent of the working-age population has a high school degree and basic literacy skills.

The good news is that compared to cities like Cleveland, Detroit, Memphis, and Baltimore, New Orleans has a smaller share of low-skilled working-age adults. But compared to many other cities, such as Raleigh, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Seattle, New Orleans has a larger share of low-skilled working-age adults. If New Orleans aspires to compete at a higher level, we have more work to do on building the skills of our current labor force.

Share of population 18-64 by target population, 2008-10 (three-year average)



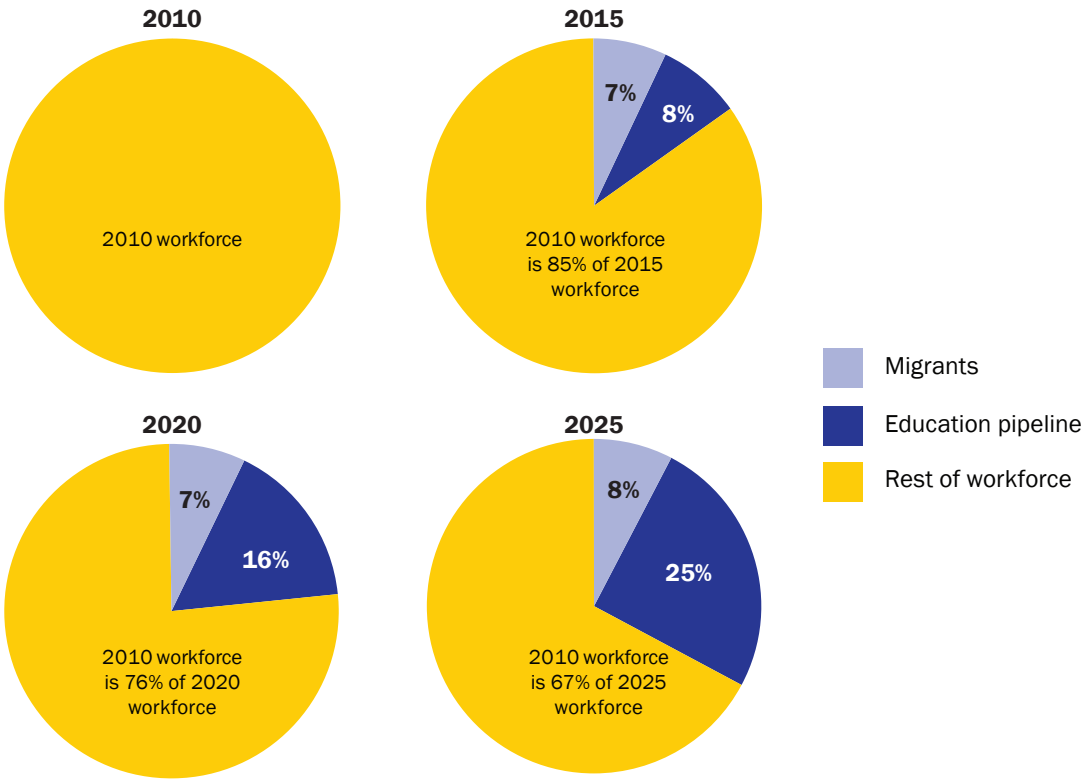
Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.
*Note: These data have margins of error which are sometimes quite large. As a result, statistical significance testing was conducted at the 95th percent confidence interval. *The percent of high school completers in Memphis and Baltimore is not statistically different from New Orleans, nor is the percent of the ESL population in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. statistically different from New Orleans.*

K-12 schools won't supply a new workforce until the year 2060.

Many business leaders and elected officials across Louisiana have emphasized the importance of improving the K-12 education system to increase the skills of our workforce. To be sure, improvement of K-12 education is essential for long-term prosperity—but it will take decades to fully take effect. For example, in New Orleans, even if there's a significant in-migration of young professionals, fully two-thirds of the city's 2025 labor pool will be adults who are currently working-age New Orleanians in 2010—well past the reach of K-12 schools.

Over the long run, the importance of improving the K-12 schools in New Orleans and across the metro cannot be overstated. But in the short- and medium-term, we must upgrade and update the skills of the current working-age population who will make up the bulk of the labor pool for decades to come. And although some high-skilled jobs will always attract workers from outside the metro area, low-skilled workers are less likely to move long distances to find work.[30] Thus, if we fail to build the skills of native low-skilled workers, we will continue to have a surplus of adults with low skills, which contributes to high unemployment, high incarceration rates, lost productivity, and cash-strapped governments.[31,32]

New Orleans adults age 18-64 in the current and projected population, 2010-2025



Source: Authors' projections based on American Community Survey 2011, Population Estimates 2011 vintage, and Census 2010.

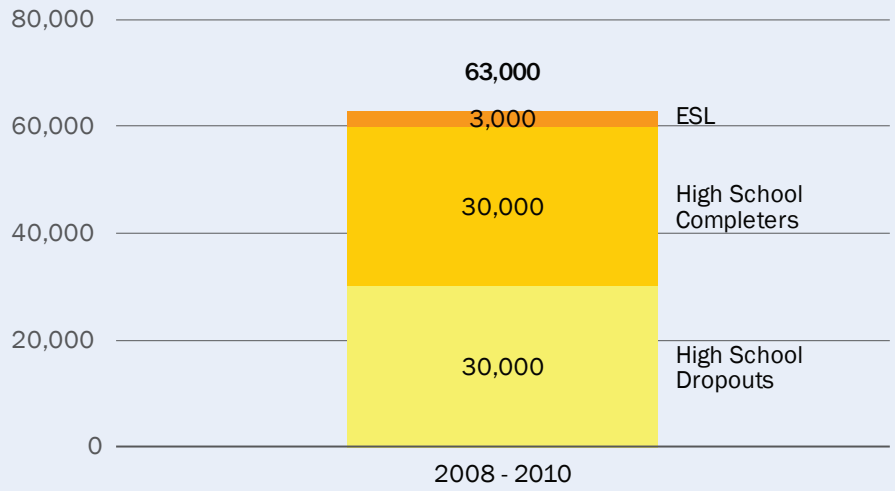
Low-skilled Adults in New Orleans

For the estimated numbers of low-skilled adults across the seven-parish metro area, check out the downloadable spreadsheet accompanying this report at www.gnocdc.org.

To inform the planning efforts of New Orleans educators and support service organizations, this section provides detailed estimates of the number of New Orleanians in each literacy target group, and the overall demographic characteristics of this target population.

The best available data suggests that there are 63,000 low-literate and low-skilled adults ages 18-64 in New Orleans who are candidates for literacy services. The vast majority of these low-skilled adults in New Orleans are high school dropouts and high school completers, with about 30,000 adults in each group.

Estimates of the low-skilled 18-64 population by target group, 2008-10 (three-year average)
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.
For definitions of ESL, High School Completer, and High School Dropout target groups, see page 6.

New York Cooks up a Recipe for Student Success

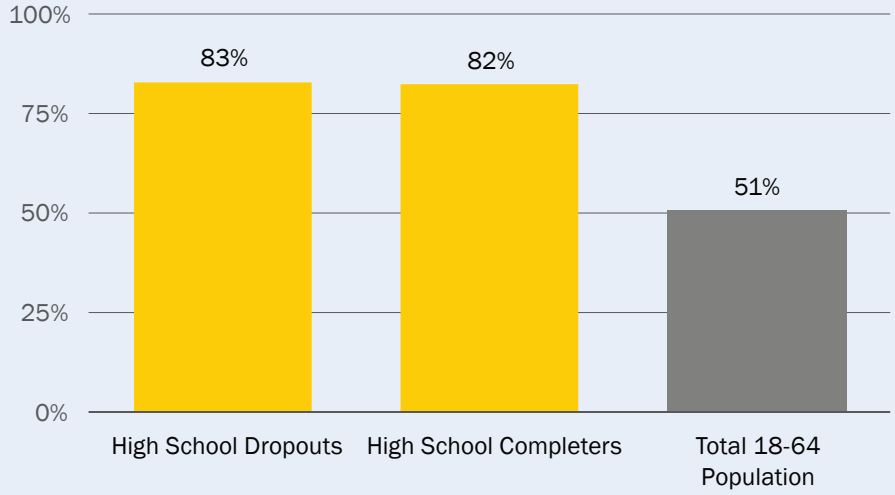
Kingsborough Community College has developed a unique curriculum for adult learners interested in careers in the Culinary Arts. Building Bridges to Success is based on other effective programs that have helped low-level students achieve entrance and advancement to higher-skilled, higher-paying career pathways. The program has 13 weeks of course-work with 15 hours of instruction per week, five of those hours being with an adult basic education instructor and the remaining jointly taught by the chef and the adult basic education instructor. Students are required to develop a business plan, cater campus events, and pass three industry certification exams. Each cohort has had strong results. Passage rates of students taking the industry certification exams are 96 percent to 100 percent. More than half of past program completers have transitioned to higher education at institutions within the New York Community College system.

Source: Adult Career Pathways News, http://www.acp-sc.org/docs/ACP_News_V1_Issue4.pdf.

Race/ethnicity

African Americans make up 51 percent of the working-age population of New Orleans, but 83 percent of high school dropouts and 82 percent of high school completers. A number of studies in recent years have demonstrated that regions that become more "equitable" (as measured by reductions in income disparities, concentrated poverty, or racial segregation) experience greater economic growth (as measured by increases in per capita income).[33] Thus, efforts to match our low-skilled minority population with basic adult education services and occupational-skills training can potentially expand the region's overall economic growth.

Share of 18-64 population that is African American, 2008-10 (three-year average)
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

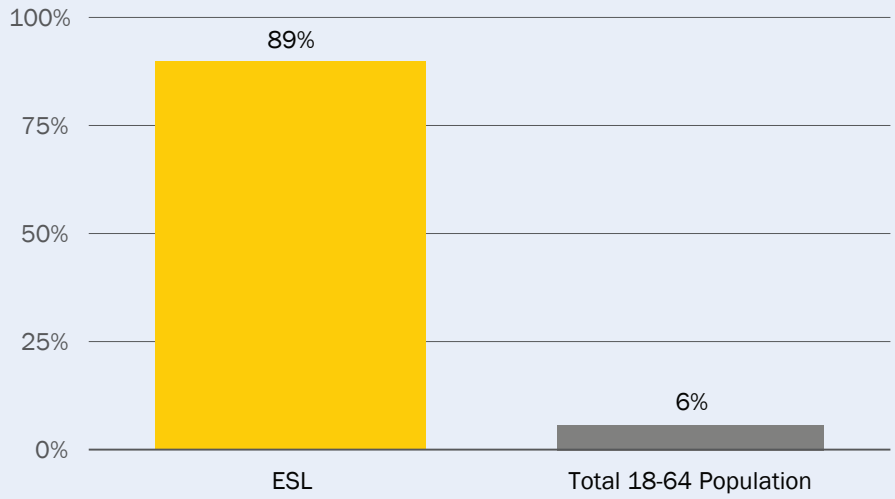
Employee Owned Company in South Bronx Builds Careers for Minority Women

Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) in the South Bronx (one of the country's most distressed inner-city areas) is a worker-owned home health care cooperative that trains and employs home health care aides. CHCA was founded on the belief that by aggressively intervening as an employer in the home health care industry, the entry-level occupation of home health care aide—which is already accessible to women with low skills and education—could be improved for the benefit of the worker. In a large growth occupational area, CHCA is restructuring the long-term care industry by serving as a model employer that offers higher wages and benefits, supportive services, full-time work, opportunities for career growth, and reduced turnover. Selecting trainees that are low-skilled (only 40 percent of workers have completed high school or a GED, and most test at 5th- to 8th-grade levels in reading and math), low-income (85 percent were dependent upon public assistance immediately before entering the training program), minority adults (virtually 100 percent of the trainees are minorities), the program provides classroom training and certification programs, on-the-job training, and peer mentorship. Internal career ladders offer employees the opportunity to move into higher-paying administrative positions.[34] The company boasts a turnover rate of just 20 percent annually compared to the industry average of 40 to 60 percent.[35]

Source: Cooperative Home Care Associates, http://www.chcany.org/index-1.html.

Hispanics have long exhibited preferences for living in suburban parishes surrounding New Orleans, and therefore constitute just six percent of the city population.[36] Yet Hispanics represent 89 percent of the ESL population. Given recent growth trends in New Orleans in the Hispanic population, the need for targeted ESL and literacy services for the Hispanic population may grow in the future.[37]

Share of 18-64 population that is Hispanic, 2008-10 (three-year average)
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

Meeting the Chicago Metro's Workforce Shortages

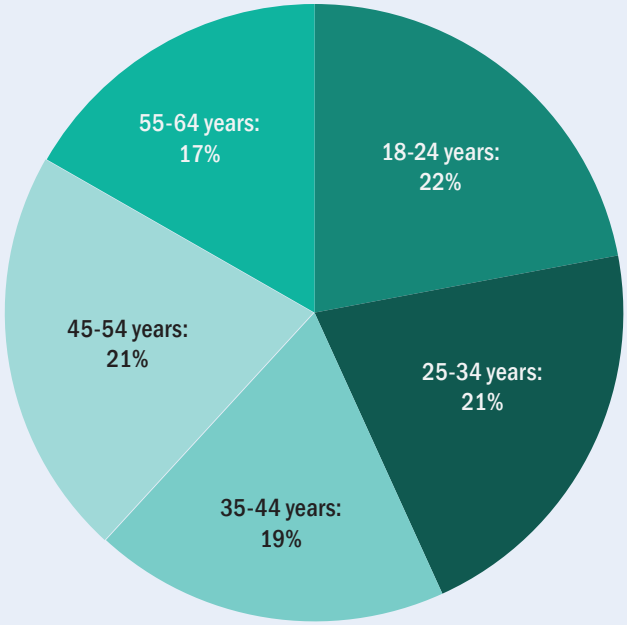
Largely due to limited language and math skills, few Latinos complete the training necessary to become Licensed Practical or Registered Nurses (LPN and RN). To address a workforce shortage in Chicago, Instituto del Progreso Latino launched Carreras en Salud (CeS) or "Careers in Health." Together, representatives from Instituto, Wilbur Wright College, and industry partners created a road map that coupled adult basic education opportunities with real world application in health care that would lead individuals with limited literacy skills to a successful career as an LPN or RN. Each member of the partnership plays a specific role in providing the needed training and employment experiences along that path. A bridge program offers English classes and a 16-week preparation course in language and math for the health care field to prepare students for admission to Wright College's rigorous LPN and RN programs. Throughout the bridge program, students are improving their language and math skills while learning medical terminology and participating in projects on topics such as cardiovascular health and cancer. As students advance through the pathway, they earn certificates and credentials that enable them to work in entry-level health care positions until they earn the LPN or RN certification. A support team comprised of a case manager, an academic advisor, a financial coach, a family counselor, an employment specialist, a basic skills tutor, and a nursing tutor are available to students at any point in the program.

Source: Instituto del Progreso Latino: Carreras en Salud, http://www.idpl.org/idpl_carreras_en_salud.html.

Age

Given that rapid technological change requires continual skill upgrades over one's lifetime, and that workers often stay in the labor force for many years beyond age 65, opportunities for acquiring literacy proficiency and occupational-training are important for low-skilled workers across a range of ages. In New Orleans, low-skilled adults are relatively evenly distributed across age groups from 18 to 64. In recent years, job training resources have increasingly trended toward younger individuals as opposed to adults ages 25 and older. While investments in young adults are important, re-engaging older adults in education and training is necessary for optimizing the productivity of our full workforce.[38]

Share of low-skilled population 18-64 by age
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

Helping Formerly Incarcerated Men Succeed

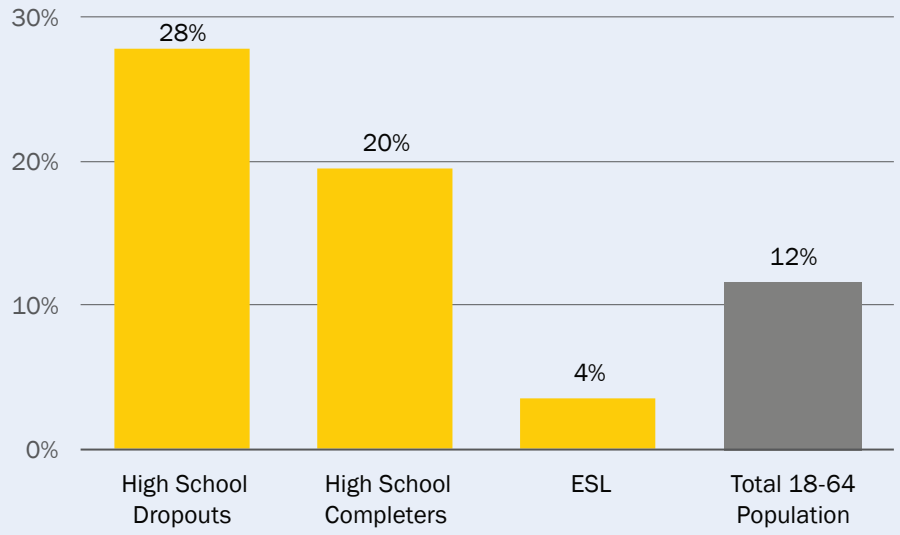
Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the country.[39] And research has revealed that individuals in prison have particularly low literacy rates.[40] A model program in East Harlem, New York, STRIVE International has helped nearly 50,000 of the most chronically unemployed individuals get jobs, with over 400 different businesses. Focusing on African American and Latino men with criminal records and problems of past drug addiction, STRIVE offers a combination of soft skills training—being on time, working in teams, and job interview preparation—with credential-bearing hard skills training, and targeted support services. With a commitment to retention, support services are offered a minimum of two years beyond graduation. The focus is on helping the individuals secure and maintain living wages in high growth occupations.

Source: STRIVE, http://striveinternational.org.

Disability status[41]

In New Orleans, high school dropouts and completers are more likely to have a disability than the overall population. While 12 percent of the overall 18-64 population reports a disability, about 28 percent of high school dropouts and 20 percent of high school completers report a disability. Reported disabilities include physical disabilities such as blindness and deafness, and also mental disabilities such as serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.[42] With a specific requirement for universal access in federally funded workforce development programs,[43] providers may need to increase their capacity to serve adults with physical and mental disabilities. Moreover, this data points to the importance of effectively teaching individuals with disabilities within our public school system to maximize high school completion and prepare students for further education or training.

Share of 18-64 population with a disability
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

Optimizing the Human Capital of Individuals with Disabilities

Many successful programs for employing individuals with disabilities exist, but the two below have a pioneering approach to coupling service and profit.[44]

Through successful marketing research and planning, Hudson Community Enterprises, located in Jersey City, NJ, took a donated Fed Ex truck and a $25,000 grant and turned it into a business that grosses almost $4 million a year and employs individuals with disabilities in 70 percent of its jobs to operate digital mail management, document imaging, and document shredding services.

Founded in 2009, the nonPareil Institute, located in Plano, TX, prepares students who have high-functioning autism for individualized, personally fulfilling white-collar careers. Operating as part university campus and part vocational center, students learn the finer points of video game and computer app design, while also building their social skills and life strategies.

Source: Hudson Community Enterprises, http://www.hudsoncommunity.org; nonPareil Institute, http://www.npitx.org/.

Using State Funds to Support the State's Economy and Train the Under- and Unemployed

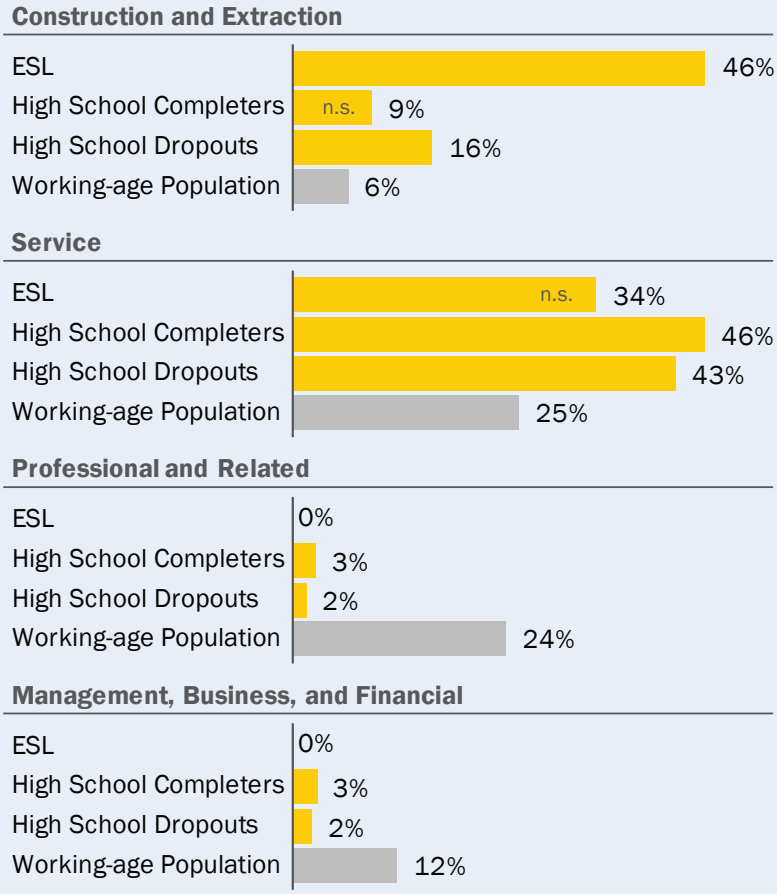
A partnership between the Urban League and Allied Construction Industries in Ohio has established a certification program that builds skilled workers in a growing industry and benefits the state at large. Construction Connections is an eight week certification program in the construction industry. Workers also participate in a three week course on resume writing and interview skills. They graduate and secure jobs with construction companies starting at $12 an hour, but ultimately making as much $30-50 an hour. Boasting an 81 percent placement rate, the partnership has a history of targeting the unemployed and underemployed adult population, including ex-offenders and minority women and men. The program is funded by the Ohio Department of Transportation (DOT), and graduates obtain jobs with construction companies that have received large DOT contracts.

Source: Adult Services Department of the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, http://www.gcul.org/index.php/programs1/jobs/.

Occupations

Those low-skilled adults who are successful in gaining employment most often secure jobs in service or construction occupations. Among high school dropouts and high school completers with jobs, over 40 percent work in service occupations compared to only 25 percent of all 18-64 year olds. Another 16 percent of high school dropouts and 46 percent of the ESL population are in construction occupations, compared to only 6 percent of the overall 18-64 population. Employer-based training and career ladders in these industries could yield increased productivity among these workers.

Share of 18-64 population within select broad occupational sectors, 2008-10 (three-year average)
New Orleans

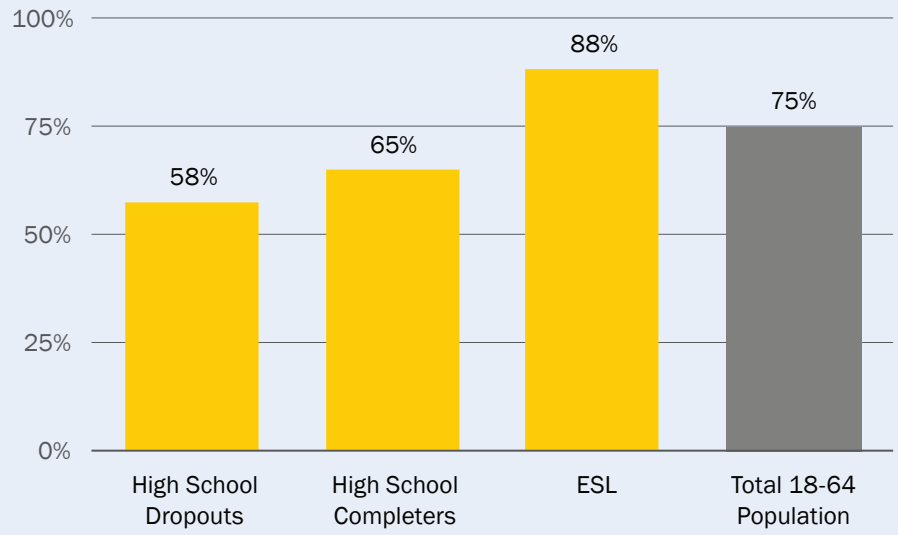


n.s.= Difference from total working-age population is not significant at 95% confidence interval.
Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

Labor force participation

The labor force participation rates for high school completers and high school dropouts are statistically lower than the overall population, while the ESL population has statistically higher rates of labor force participation. Only 58 percent of high school dropouts and 65 percent of completers were employed or seeking work compared to 75 percent of the overall 18-64 population. These low labor force participation rates likely reflect the fact that many high school dropouts and completers have become discouraged at their job prospects and stopped applying for jobs. Basic skills training coupled with occupational training targeted to current job openings that pay attractive wages is an important way to increase workforce participation, particularly among discouraged workers.

Share of 18-64 population in the labor force
New Orleans



Source: GNOCDC analysis of IPUMS USA microdata from the American Community Survey 2008-2010.

Using Public Awareness to Fill Occupational Gaps

With the skills of construction tradesmen in high demand, Alabama's "Go Build Alabama" campaign focuses on the craftsmen trades of welders, brickmasons, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters—many of the occupations projected for growth in Louisiana. Although the need for these positions, which often require an apprenticeship, has risen and unemployment has continued to grow, only one tradesman is taking the place of every four that are retiring. The Alabama legislature established the Alabama Construction Recruitment Institute to partner with contractor and builder associations, trade unions, the Alabama college system, and construction companies throughout the state to recruit and train more young adults into these occupations. The program was recently replicated in Georgia.

Source: Go Build Alabama, http://www.gobuildalabama.com/.

Most regional job openings will require at least middle-skills.

While boosting skills of lower-skilled workers will undoubtedly yield economic benefits, doing so with a strategy that increases employability is key to maximizing return on investment. A review of current job projections suggests that many middle-skilled jobs will await those lower-skilled adults who go on to obtain an occupational certificate, other credential, or associate's degree.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission develops job projections that incorporate the specific plans of large local employers and major economic development projects such as the future hospitals in Mid-City. These projections reveal that the New Orleans region will add 26,470 middle-skilled positions from 2010 to 2020—more jobs than projected for low- or high-skilled occupations.[45]

When the need to replace existing workers who retire, relocate, or change careers is factored in, there will be 73,000 middle-skilled job openings from 2010 to 2020, and another 30,900 high-skilled job openings. Together, middle- and high-skilled jobs will account for over half of job openings, reflecting the region's shift toward knowledge-based industries.[46] Indeed, 60 percent of openings for new positions will require middle- and high-skilled workers compared to 49 percent of openings for retirement positions. Thus, strengthening workforce skills is critical to employers in high growth sectors, including industries targeted by state and local economic development officials. Notably, these projections do not account for economic development initiatives underway to grow jobs in digital media, advanced manufacturing, and emerging environment industries such as water management and wetland restoration. All of these industries will likely generate an even larger number of middle- and high-skilled jobs.[47]

Table 1. Projections of demand for workers by skill level required on jobs, 2010-2020
New Orleans region

		Employment		Net Change	
	Job Openings	2010	2020	Number	Percent
High-skilled	30,900	81,320	93,830	12,510	15%
Middle-skilled	73,000	218,230	244,700	26,470	12%
Low-skilled	93,500	229,930	255,850	25,920	11%
Total	**197,400**	**529,480**	**594,380**	**64,900**	**12%**

Source: Authors' analysis of Louisiana Workforce Commission occupational projections.
Note: We define "middle-skilled" occupations as those that require some education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree. These postsecondary education or training requirements can include associate's degrees, vocational certificates, moderate-term or long-term on-the-job training, one or more years of work experience, or "some college" less than a bachelor's degree. This definition is based on Holzer, H. & Lerman, R. (2007). America's forgotten middle-skill jobs. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute. (p. 8). Retrieved October 22, 2012 from http://www.urban.org/publications/411633.html.

What makes a successful program?

Successful programs include career pathways.[48] Career pathways have increased education, job skills, and wage levels among low-income, low-skilled adults across all age groups.[49]

Research shows commonalities across successful career pathway programs, including:

1. A high-quality education program;
2. A range of student academic and non-academic support services;
3. An industry strategy that focuses on meeting business needs by training students for specific job vacancies at partner businesses.[50]

Analyzing the Louisiana Workforce Commission projections by specific education and training requirements, we find that middle-skill jobs requiring a high school diploma and moderate- to long-term on-the-job training will account for 49,600 job openings because of high rates of retirement from these occupations by 2020. Middle-skill jobs requiring some college will account for only 1,700 job openings. Middle-skill jobs requiring an associate's degree or a postsecondary non-degree award will account for a combined 21,700 job openings.

Table 2. Projections of demand for workers by education and training level required on jobs, 2010-2020
New Orleans region

		Employment		Net Change	
	Job Openings	2010	2020	Number	Percent
Doctoral or professional degree	3,200	9,770	11,380	1,610	16%
Master's degree	3,200	8,980	10,230	1,250	14%
Bachelor's degree	24,500	62,570	72,220	9,650	15%
Associate's degree	12,300	38,150	43,830	5,680	15%
Postsecondary non-degree award	9,400	26,340	30,220	3,880	15%
Some college, no degree	1,700	3,190	4,060	870	27%
High school diploma or GED, plus at least 1 year of work experience or moderate- to long-term on-the-job training	49,600	150,550	166,590	16,040	11%
High school diploma or equivalent (no additional training or experience required)	25,800	77,630	83,340	5,710	7%
Less than high school	67,700	152,300	172,510	20,210	13%
Total	**197,400**	**529,480**	**594,380**	**64,900**	**12%**

Source: Authors' analysis of Louisiana Workforce Commission occupational projections.

State Pathways to a More Prosperous and Inclusive Workforce

Kentucky Career Pathways is a statewide system of regional partnerships comprised of community and technical colleges, adult education providers, employers, economic development and Workforce Investment Boards, one-stop[51] partners, and support service agencies. The initiative demonstrates the power of a team in supplying skilled workers for large industry sectors including health care, manufacturing, construction, and transportation. They target underprepared and underemployed incumbent workers with limited basic skills and educational attainment, many of whom are low-income, for training and upgrading in their companies to fill high-wage, high-demand occupations. Participating colleges offer classes at times convenient for the workers (such as evening and weekends), and at alternative sites, such as at the workplace. Colleges also integrate intensive student support systems including enhanced mentoring, advising, and career counseling.[52] Retention, completion, and GPAs have been significantly higher for Career Pathways students than the overall community and technical college student population. Key to success is leveraging local resources and improving the alignment among economic development, workforce development, and postsecondary education institutions.[53]

Source: Kentucky Community and Technical College System, http://www.kctcs.edu/System_Initiatives/Career_Pathways.aspx.

Many low-skilled jobs are projected to open in service sectors, sales occupations, and administrative support (see Table 3), but there will likely be a glut of workers competing for these jobs, which will keep wages low. Preparing low-skilled workers for middle-skilled jobs could reduce the glut in the low-skilled labor market and help meet growing demand in middle-skilled occupations. Between 2010 and 2020, the largest number of middle-skilled job openings (15,600) will be in professional and related occupations, which include registered nurses, paralegals, computer support specialists, licensed practical nurses, and pharmacy technicians. Another 10,200 middle-skilled job openings will be in the service sector, which includes nursing aides, medical assistants, police officers, fire fighters, and food service managers.

Table 3. Projections of total job openings by skill level required and broad occupational sector, 2010-2020
New Orleans region

Occupational sector	Low-skilled	Middle-skilled	High-skilled	Total
Construction and Extraction	3,500	5,800	0	9,300
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	100	0	0	100
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	300	8,400	0	8,700
Management, Business, and Financial	0	7,800	8,800	16,600
Office and Adm. Support	17,300	8,000	0	25,300
Production	1,400	7,000	0	8,400
Professional and Related	1,600	15,600	19,500	36,700
Sales and Related	18,900	7,200	800	26,900
Service	40,900	10,200	200	51,300
Transportation and Material Moving	9,500	3,000	1,600	14,100
Total	**93,500**	**73,000**	**30,900**	**197,400**

Source: Authors' analysis of Louisiana Workforce Commission occupational projections.

Louisville Heats up to 55,000 Degrees

Using benchmarks over time, Greater Louisville launched a massive community-wide initiative to jumpstart the region's ability to compete in a global economy. Building more opportunities for Louisville residents required creating a common vision in the community for the link between education and future economic prosperity, setting a goal to increase the number of residents with two and four year degrees by 55,000 (with a minimum of 15,000 degree holders being African American), and getting behind a number of initiatives that include adult literacy. The initiative also targets working adults that started a college degree but did not finish, and works directly with their employers to support their efforts to reenroll while maintaining their job.

Source: 55,000 degrees, http://55000degrees.org/ & http://55000degrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/55000EreportLR.pdf.

Specific middle-skilled occupations that are projected to have more than 1,000 openings between 2010 and 2020 are listed below. Many of these occupations—including bookkeepers, general managers, office supervisors, and maintenance workers—are distributed virtually evenly across major industry groups. As a result, these occupations will be particularly important in growing industries such as water management, motion picture, bio-innovation, and next wave oil and gas. For a complete list of all middle-skilled occupations projected to have job openings by 2020, download the spreadsheet that accompanies this report.

While middle-skilled jobs are expected to grow at a rapid pace, it is important to remember that not all middle-skilled occupations pay higher wages. More detailed analyses are needed to prioritize occupations that pay wages sufficient for the current cost-of-living in the region, or that provide career ladders and offer economic mobility.

Table 4. Projections of middle-skilled openings by education and experience, 2010-2020
New Orleans region

Middle-skilled occupations	Openings	Typical education needed for entry	Experience or on-the-job training required
Registered Nurses	5,600	Associate's degree	
Sales Reps, Wholesale and Manuf. (Except Tech. & Scientific Products)	2,700	High school diploma	Moderate-term
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Admin. Support Workers	2,400	High school diploma	1 to 5 years
General and Operations Managers	2,300	Associate's degree	1 to 5 years
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	2,300	High school diploma	Moderate-term
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	2,200	High school diploma	1 to 5 years
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,000	Postsec. non-degree	
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,800	High school diploma	Moderate-term
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	1,800	Postsec. non-degree	
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	1,600	High school diploma	1 to 5 years
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Food Prep. and Serving Workers	1,500	High school diploma	1 to 5 years
Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	1,300	High school diploma	Long-term
Carpenters	1,200	High school diploma	Apprenticeship
Insurance Sales Agents	1,200	High school diploma	Moderate-term
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	1,100	High school diploma	Moderate-term
Electricians	1,000	High school diploma	Apprenticeship
Medical Assistants	1,000	High school diploma	Moderate-term
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	1,000	High school diploma	Apprenticeship

Source: Authors' analysis of Louisiana Workforce Commission occupational projections.
Notes: For more information about the definitions for the education, work experience, and training requirements, see Lockard, C.B. & Wolf, M. (2012). Occupational employment projections to 2020. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Monthly Labor Review. (p. 104).

What's my Role?

Economic Development Organizations. Convene employers in industry clusters with education institutions, training providers, support service providers, and WIBs to innovate solutions for industry-specific workforce challenges.

Employers. Work with education institutions, training providers, support service providers, and WIBs to identify and solve workforce challenges and advocate for new ways to make use of a broader range of funding streams.

Educators. Respond quickly and nimbly to provide training in areas of highest job growth and demand.

Policymakers. Leverage flexible funding streams to combine with Workforce Investment Act dollars so that adult learners have a full set of training and support services.

Support Service Organizations. Coordinate services with educators, WIBs, and employers so learners have the supports they need to focus on training and making the transition to employment.

WIBs. Think boldly about solving nascent workforce challenges in partnership with economic development leaders, employers, educators, and support service organizations.

Philanthropies. Work closely with economic development leaders, employers, and WIBs to provide funding that fills gaps in education, training, and support services.

Conclusion

Creating an effective workforce development system that supplies the workers needed for our changing economy in a community with a large share of low literacy adults is no simple task. It requires community-wide vision, specific goals, high level leadership, and the alignment of public and private funding streams targeted to well-informed strategies. Emerging industry clusters should drive the focus of programs that link workers directly from training to employment opportunities. Trainers and educators must be nimble and able to shift as market demands change. As demonstrated by the case studies presented throughout this report, strong coordination is needed between adult basic education providers, support service providers, the community college system, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and employers. And job coaching should continue for at least two years into employment to ensure that soft skills are solidified. Finally, this work will require a sustained commitment, because there are no quick fixes. But inadequately addressed, persistent low adult literacy levels contribute to poor worker productivity, increases in crime and public health expenditures, and sub-optimal educational attainment among children.

Other regions have recognized the importance of making workforce skill building among their highest priorities with impressive results. There is no doubt that New Orleanians, working together, can accomplish the same. In recent years, New Orleans has made remarkable progress on multiple fronts—from massive neighborhood recovery, to unprecedented ethics reform, to a comprehensive K-12 public school makeover.[54] New Orleans has made strides in workforce development, too, as directors of the WIBs in Orleans and surrounding parishes are meeting regularly to develop a coordinated regional approach, and the New Orleans WIB has recently completed a five-year plan.[55] But our workforce challenges cannot be solved by the WIBs working alone and relying solely on shrinking government coffers.[56]

The challenge of workforce development in greater New Orleans will require an "all hands on deck" approach akin to the city's massive blight reduction efforts. New Orleans' successful and innovative blight remediation initiative works across silos in an overarching, loosely knit collaboration with high level leadership that deploys strategic communications to unify action, and advocates for flexibility in federal funding streams to more effectively accomplish goals. This same model can provide inspiration for workforce development.

Louisiana's economic development organizations now enjoy unprecedented alignment in their targeting of knowledge-based industries such as emerging environmental industries, bio-innovation, and digital media. High level economic development leadership can convene key employers in these emerging industry clusters with education institutions, training providers, support service providers, and WIBs to identify and solve industry-specific workforce challenges in innovative ways. Importantly, these industry-led alliances can then advocate for new ways to make use of available federal funds to accomplish their goals. For example, Texas enacted a state law that consolidates workforce funds with food stamps, child care, and other federal funding streams so regions can bring together multiple programs and supports needed to effectively train and place low-skilled workers. And federal funding can be matched with private and local funding, as in Michigan, where the state matches federal workforce funds with philanthropic and private sector funds, or Boston, where the city uses fees charged to developers building within city limits to finance job training programs for the city's lower skilled populations.[57]

Recently greater New Orleans has ranked high for its economic performance. New practices to attract and start businesses in emerging industries have yielded impressive results. Yet, workforce concerns have been highlighted in nearly every news report about companies considering moving here.[58] Workforce development is the next logical priority in our critically important efforts to develop a robust economy that can compete with the likes of Raleigh, NC and Houston, TX to draw business and investment from around the world.

APPENDIX A: Literacy Definitions and Designations

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Excerpted and abridged from "The Elusive Redeeming Paradox: A Case Study of Adult Literacy Public Policy Based in Greater New Orleans."

Although adult literacy is a subset of the adult education field, the term adult education is often used to mean adult literacy programming in the adult literacy world. Another widely-used name, Adult Basic Education (ABE), emerged with the first federal legislation in 1966 (National Advisory Council on Adult Education, 1980; Rose, 1991). Quigley (1997) noted that the term literacy was replaced by adult basic education in the 1960s—evidently because legislators then—and since—have been reluctant to admit there is such a problem as "illiteracy" or "low literacy." The term, if not the problem, was masked for decades by labels such as ABE, and even today as "essential skills." Sticht (1998) argues that the field needs to have a well-known name (like other educational systems) in order to become a recognized and fully funded institution; his most recently proposed but as yet not widely adopted name is the Adult Education and Literacy System or AELS.

The adult literacy field, like adult education, is so fractured and varied that almost every ten years there is a published review that attempts to describe it. Fingeret (1984, 1992), author of the first two comprehensive examinations of the literature published on adult literacy, states her purpose was "to clarify and examine conventional wisdom and stereotypes about adult literacy" (Fingeret, 1984, p. vii). Fingeret (1984) notes that early definitions of adult literacy began as the simple ability to read and write; however, most literature since views literacy as "a shifting, abstract term, impossible to define in isolation from a specific time, place, and culture; literacy, therefore, is described as historically and culturally relative" (p. 9).

The most widely cited definition of adult literacy in the United States today was developed for the National Adult Literacy Survey in the early 1990s. Specifically, adult literacy involves "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993, p. 2). A variation of this definition made its way into the most recent major national legislation which funds adult literacy programs, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Act proposes three goals for adult education and literacy:

> 1. Assist adults in becoming literate and obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency.
>
> 2. Assist adults who are parents in obtaining the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children.
>
> 3. Assist adults in completing high school or the equivalent.
>
> (Employment and Training Administration, 1998, p. 3)

The International Adult Literacy Survey adopted the following definition: "Literacy is using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Kirsch, 2001, p. 6). The American Library Association points out that digital literacy, "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate and create, and communicate" has become an important component of the skills necessary for self-sufficiency (American Library Association).

The third comprehensive literacy overview by Belzer (2003) describes the cornucopia of included instructional activities:

> Beginning and intermediate reading, writing and numeracy, pre-GED and GED (General Educational Development) preparation, and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) offered in a wide range of contexts such as community-based organizations, work force development programs and workplaces, family literacy programs and prisons. (p. 7)

APPENDIX A: References

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APPENDIX B: Promising practices and where to learn more

On page 9, New York Cooks up a Recipe for Student Success
Source: Adult Career Pathways News, http://www.acp-sc.org/docs/ACP_News_V1_Issue4.pdf.

On page 10, Employee Owned Company in South Bronx Builds Careers for Minority Women
Source: Cooperative Home Care Associates, http://www.chcany.org/index-1.html.

On page 11, Meeting the Chicago Metro's Workforce Shortages
Source: Instituto del Progreso Latino: Carreras en Salud, http://www.idpl.org/idpl_carreras_en_salud.html.

On page 12, Helping Formerly Incarcerated Men Succeed
Source: STRIVE, http://striveinternational.org.

On page 13, Optimizing the Human Capital of Individuals with Disabilities
Source: Hudson Community Enterprises, http://www.hudsoncommunity.org; Rubicon Landscaping, http://www.rubiconlandscape.com; nonPareil Institute, http://www.npitx.org/.

On page 14, Using State Funds to Support the State's Economy and Train the Under- and Unemployed
Source: Adult Services Department of the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, http://www.gcul.org/index.php/programs1/jobs/.

On page 15, Using Public Awareness to Fill Occupational Gaps
Source: Go Build Alabama, http://www.gobuildalabama.com/.

On page 16, What makes a successful program?
Source: Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD): National Career Pathways Network, http://www.cord.org/career-pathways/.

On page 17, Statewide Pathways to a more Prosperous and Inclusive Workforce
Source: Kentucky Community and Technical College System, http://www.kctcs.edu/System_Initiatives/Career_Pathways.aspx; Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE), http://www.risepartnership.org/.

On page 18, Louisville Heats up to 55,000 Degrees
Source: 55,000 degrees, http://55000degrees.org/ & http://55000degrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/55000EreportLR.pdf.

APPENDIX C: Methodology

The projections of the 2025 population for New Orleans were generated using a cohort-component forecasting model. These population projections started with Census 2010 population counts by age for Orleans Parish, and applied Center for Disease Control (CDC) Age-Specific Death Rates (ASDR) for Louisiana for 2001 to estimate the number of people who survive to the following year in each age group. The ASDR for 2001 was used knowing that the denominator for these rates was the most certain given its proximity to the Census 2000 head count. Survival rates were also calculated for females in order to estimate births each year, which were derived using the 2009 U.S. fertility rate for females ages 15 to 44. In addition, the CDC estimated sex ratio of births from 1940-2002 was used to determine the number of females born each year to sustain the projections. Births were added to each year's age-specific estimates and survival rates for each year calculated.

Given current economic forecasts, it's reasonable to assume that the number of newcomers who might come to the region could be offset by those who leave the region for work opportunities resulting in no significant net in-migration. (Although zero net in-migration may seem pessimistic, simply factoring in expected births and deaths results in a 4 percent population growth rate for the metro and 5 percent growth rate for Orleans Parish by 2020, which is not inconsistent with the 2011 Louisiana Workforce Commission's 3.5 percent predicted job growth rate over 10 years.)

Nonetheless, the authors incorporated more optimistic in-migration rates. In-migration for 2010 to 2011 was based on 2011 age-specific migration data from the American Community Survey. Out-migration was then calculated by controlling the resulting 2011 population projections to the 2011 Census Bureau population estimates by age for Orleans Parish. In the absence of Census Bureau population estimates beyond 2011, we used the change in USPS households actively receiving mail from 2011 to 2012 to produce 2012 population projections. The change in USPS households actively receiving mail from 2010 to 2011 matches the same growth rate in the population as estimated by the Census Bureau. However, from 2011 to 2012, the change in households receiving mail declines 50 percent, thus predicting a slowing of the population growth. Therefore, we controlled our model to the assumption that the rate of growth in the population would continue to decline by 50 percent each year through 2025, which results in a robust 14 percent growth rate for Orleans Parish from 2010 to 2025. To confirm that 14 percent population growth over 15 years was optimistic but still feasible, we compared it to population growth rates for Austin, TX Portland, OR, and Washington, D.C. from 2000 to 2010 which had population growth rates of 20 percent, 10 percent, and 5 percent respectively.

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About the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center

Since 1997, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC) has been gathering, analyzing, and disseminating data to help leaders at all levels work smarter and more strategically. A product of Nonprofit Knowledge Works, GNOCDC plays a critical role in assessing the strength of the New Orleans economy and housing market since the onset of the Great Recession. GNOCDC is also recognized across the country for expertise in New Orleans demographics, disaster recovery indicators, and actionable data visualization.