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# FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION

*Application Deadline: February 18, 2022*

## Program Basics

Summer Fellows work through June and July, earning a living wage for 300 hours. Students are given a specific project with their host organizations, working 7.5 hours per day, Monday through Thursday. Every Friday the students as a group are immersed in the city life of Buffalo with neighborhood walking tours, field trips, cultural experiences, and discussions with guest experts and civic leaders. Friday's workshops are also forums for learning from each other by sharing weekly journals, project experiences, research and other accomplishments. Workshop Wednesdays offer specific skill-building opportunities and once/week Fellows get to hear from part High Road Alumni. Group housing arrangements are facilitated for those interested. A mandatory one credit pre-course will take place the second half of Spring 2022 to prepare students for their fieldwork.

## Place

Cornell ILR's extension history begins with Buffalo. Since 1946, ILR has played a vital role in the region, working in partnership with businesses, unions, government, education and community organizations to build an economy that works for all. High Road Fellowships were launched in 2009 as a new way to connect students with practitioners who were driving change in the local economy. Undergoing dynamic reinvention, Buffalo is home to a rich array of such creative community leaders and organizations tackling rust belt challenges.

## Community Partner

Each student is placed with a host organization affiliated with the Partnership for the Public Good, a civic organization made up of over 300 community partners promoting more equitable and sustainable economic development in Greater Buffalo. PPG produces action research and policy recommendations on pressing local, regional and state concerns. Students gain hands-on experiences working with organizations in the vital nonprofit sector of the economy where job creation, neighborhood revitalization, and the greening of the economy are everyday reality.

## Student Criteria

High Road Fellows are Cornell undergraduates interested in grassroots democracy and how individuals can help create a more equitable economy. It is a competitive application process.



The term High Road economic development refers to policies and practices that advance economic vitality, sustainability, and equitable economic opportunity through innovation, productivity improvement, constructive labor management relations, environmental responsibility, efficient resource utilization, productive investment, and strong communities. Rooted in the traditional concept of "high road" as an ethically superior choice over "low road" ways, this application to economic development represents a vision of a better social economy.

# PROSPECTIVE HIGH ROAD FELLOWSHIP PLACEMENTS AND PROJECTS

## 1199 SEIU

2421 Main St. Suite 100 Buffalo, NY 14214 | <https://www.1199seiu.org/>

**About:** With over 450,000 members throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, and Washington, DC, 1199SEIU is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in the nation. Since our founding in 1932, our mission has been to stand up for quality healthcare, good jobs and social justice for all.

**Project:** As the main focus, the High Road Fellow will work with the Administrative Organizer in all aspects of the contract campaign for one of our NH institutions. The High Road Fellow will prepare a contract campaign summary (no specific format necessary- video, paper, slideshow, etc.). This contract campaign summary should feature member interviews, and an assessment of the campaign. The fellow should identify successful strategies, areas that could be improved, and mistakes that may have been made. This summary will be used for member and staff education and delegate assemblies and all-staff meetings.

Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Chart facilities to better organize the membership for the campaign
- Communicate with members and member leaders to provide bargaining updates and bring back member feedback to the bargaining committee
- Help prepare bargaining update newsletters to distribute to membership
- Observe negotiations and caucuses
- Observe bargaining committee meetings with elected officials for bargaining updates and requests for support
- Prepare and assist with escalation campaign (sticker campaign, potential informational picket prep, potential strike prep)
- Work with communications department on public campaign- social media, press, etc.
- Observe and shadow: political department, new organizing department, etc.
- Observe and assist with grievance handling, labor management meetings, etc.

## Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology

1221 Main Street Buffalo, NY 14209 | [www.buffaloartstechcenter.org](http://www.buffaloartstechcenter.org)

**About:** BCAT's Youth Arts & Technology Program engages high school youth in the arts and technology to keep them motivated, resilient and confident in school through graduation with a plan for their future. Our Youth are often underserved and under-resourced in their schools which prevents them from fair and equitable access to college or career pathways. The work done at BCAT is aimed at leveling the field for them. BCAT's tuition-free instruction builds skills for future success including classes taught in music production/engineering, 3D printing, mobile app development, photography/videography, and public art. Youth develop positive identity and creativity, and gain consistent access to academic support, mentoring, and college/career

**1199  
SEIU**

**BUFFALO  
CENTER  
FOR ARTS  
& TECHNOLOGY**

guidance motivating them to stay in school, graduate, and have confidence in their plans for a productive future.

**Project:** The main project is to collaborate with our team on the BCAT Youth Arts Program (YAP) to identify the components of a strong Youth Portfolio of work that each youth will have as they transition from high school to their post-high school life. The portfolio Template will then be designed, developed, and consistently implemented into our program for all of our youth to prepare them for the implementation of these portfolios. We will also be developing and implementing supplemental material and procedures to scaffold this process. This work is central to the YAP program as one of our overarching goals is to have all of our youth graduate with a transition plan to college/career. This includes having a portfolio that represents their work, growth and accomplishments. These portfolios will include things such as resumes, transcripts, projects, artists statements, writing samples, etc. The fellow will be a part of the team that develops and organizes components of the youth portfolio as well as help the youth college and career coordinator develop long term material and procedures that will help youth complete their portfolios. The final product will be a template that can consistently be used to build each youth's portfolios plus any supplemental materials they develop.



### **Buffalo Go Green / Urban Fruits and Veggies**

Dupont St. and Glenwood Ave. Buffalo, NY 14208 | <https://www.urbanfv.com/>

**About:** Urban Fruits & Veggies (UFV) has an urban farm, mobile produce market that services food desert areas and underserved communities bringing access to healthy fruits & vegetables and nutrition education. We sell at local farmers markets weekly from June to October and have a corporate wellness division where we imbed our services into local companies, universities, and other organizations' wellness programs. Buffalo Go Green is one of our initiatives that provides services and training to the underserved populations in our community. We create leaders in the Green Industry & Agriculture by meeting students & families where they are so that we can get them to where they need to be to have healthy, successful and sustainable families & careers.

**Project:** The High Road Fellow fellow will be involved with all of the programing in our underserved areas. They would participate, observe, gather feedback from participants, and explore the question as to how we can we enhance our programs to better serve our community. The fellow would draft a report on findings (no specific format determined yet- video, paper, slideshow, etc.). We want to make sure we are providing services that are needed and in ways that are benefiting our customers. Our staff is diverse and our locations are across the city and some suburban areas. Equity is always top of mind.

### **Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition**

37 Franklin Street, 2nd floor Buffalo, NY 14202 | [www.bncrc.org](http://www.bncrc.org)

**About:** Our mission at the BNCRC is to eliminate inequitable banking practices and the enduring impact of redlining on the people of Western New York. The BNCRC advocates for and monitors existing CBAs to ensure our community receives the dedication and commitment it deserves. Working with local institutions, they advocate for fairer policies, better products and



services, and to support the community in order to make banking and financial success an achievable reality.

**Project:** Over the course of 8 weeks, the High Road Fellow, along with their supervisor, will work to create and convene a Buffalo-Niagara public banking coalition. This will involve creating forward facing material, meeting with local community organizations for outreach and education in addition to facilitation of meetings and attendance at other statewide efforts around public banking. The work is part of the Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestments efforts in support of the New York State Equity Agenda to pass the New York State Public Banking Act. Not only does a public bank allow for greater transparency and accountability, but it also centers communities that historically have been neglected by traditional financial institutions either through community reinvestment or individual retail banking. Public banking is an opportunity to address both of these as both forms of a public bank are an option. Public banking ensures that public dollars are used for the public good and bring us closer to community control. This project builds on previous High Road Fellow work on both the national and international impact of public banking on communities.



## The Burchfield Penney Art Center

1300 Elmwood Avenue Buffalo, New York 14222 | <https://www.burchfieldpenney.org/>

**About:** The Burchfield Penney Art Center is a museum dedicated to the art and vision of Charles E. Burchfield and distinguished artists of Buffalo, Niagara and Western New York. Through our affiliation with SUNY Buffalo State, we encourage learning and celebrate our richly creative and diverse community. The Burchfield Penney features more than 30 exhibitions annually. While many are curated from our extensive collections, we often bring new work into the museum through temporary exhibitions and works on loan. The Burchfield Penney commits to inspire, invest in, and celebrate the historical and contemporary accomplishments of artists. We will energize the WNY community and SUNY Buffalo State through meaningful, educational, and engaging experiences and will sustain and enhance our culture and environment through our decisions and actions.

**Project:** The work of this project touches on forwarding three in-motion aspects of our Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) work related to the Burchfield Penney Art Center's curatorial and programmatic impact: 1. Research and implement a DEAI-based assessment of our museum's fine art collection. All collection records are digitized and available in our collections database, which will facilitate the assessment. 2. Distribution and analysis of an existing DEAI questionnaire for artists, performers, and collaborators that have exhibited at BPAC over the past 3-5 years. This will require collecting email addresses from curators and programming staff, sending out the Google Form questionnaire, and then presenting a short report on the findings. 3. If time allows, writing artist biographies of under-represented artists for the Burchfield Penney Art Center's WNY artist database. The goals are to have empirical data on how inclusive our collection and artist collaborator experience is.

This work is part of the Burchfield Penney's active campaign to integrate DEAI work into every aspect of our institution, from every department to our Board of Directors. Expanding DEAI integration is part of a larger movement happening in some of Buffalo's larger cultural institutions; in 2020, 10 cultural organizations received funding from the Community Foundation

of Buffalo to pursue a deeper understanding of DEAI work, collectively as well as in our individual organizations. The development of our DEAI committee has grown out of the trainings by the Race Matters Institute funded through the Community Foundation grant. The work we want the High Road Fellow to engage in will help us take the values and theories our staff has learned into tangible practice. There will be a few final work products as relate the three aspects of this project as detailed above: 1. A report about implementing a DEAI fine art collection assessment and the beginning of an analysis of our collection according to these standards. The HRF will be able to take the report with them for their portfolio. 2. A finalized past artists/performers/collaborators questionnaire and a report on the DEAI data received from them. 3. Artist biographies, as time allows. The HRF will receive credit for all artist biographies they write, and will be encouraged to keep copies of these, as well as all assessment documents, for their portfolio.

As a regional museum dedicated to the arts and artists of Western New York, it is crucial that we develop a deeper understanding of how to be more inclusive, diverse, accessible, and equitable to our local communities. As an organization, we are committed to growth in these ways, and have demonstrated our commitment by conducting the MASS Action assessment (<https://www.museumaction.org/>) as a staff and formulating a DEAI committee with staff and board participation. As a museum, we cannot understand how we most need to grow if we do not understand where we are, and where we have come from. By conducting an analysis of our collection, we can finally understand where our most egregious gaps and shortcomings are, artistically. By asking artists/performers/collaborators about their backgrounds and experiences of working with us, we can also better understand in what ways we need to grow to ensure we are respectfully serving and engaging with all communities of Buffalo.

## Center for Employment Opportunities

170 Franklin Street, Suite 701 Buffalo, NY 14202 | [www.ceoworks.org](http://www.ceoworks.org)

**About:** For more than 30 years, the Center for Employment Opportunities' goal has been to provide immediate, comprehensive, and effective employment services for men and women returning from incarceration. CEO offers comprehensive employment services exclusively for people with criminal records. CEO's model is based on a highly structured program of life skill education, short-term paid transitional employment, full-time job placement, and post-placement services.

**Project:** CEO Buffalo seeks to deepen work in the community, increase the supportive services for our participants, and improve access to employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals currently not reached by partnering with a local organization assisting individuals and families in Buffalo. These supports include on-site childcare, benefits access, healthcare supports, and financial literacy and empowerment. Partnering with community organizations provides another level of re-entry resources for CEO's participants to be part of their communities in positive and significant ways.

To help provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals with criminal convictions who have recently returned home from incarceration, the Fellow will be responsible for partnership cultivation and executing a Community Service Day event for CEO



staff, participants and partnering organization and evaluating the newly launched One Stop Hub involving:

- Meeting with Site Director and CEO leadership to assess community partnership and supportive services
- Attend regional anti-poverty, workforce, and reentry coalition meetings and other events within the community to explore possible opportunities for collaboration and support
- Work closely with the Director and Service Link Stop Organizational Panel members and the county to enhance services performed by the newly launched reentry one stop hub.
- Establish communication with potential partnering agencies and propose Community Service Day events for both organizations.



## **Citizens for Regional Transit**

617 Main Street Suite #201, Buffalo, NY 14203 | [www.citizenstransit.org](http://www.citizenstransit.org)

**About:** The purpose of CRT is to build an understanding of the benefits of transit by facilitating public participation through educational events, information sharing and other outreach efforts. Citizens for Regional Transit operates on a grass-roots level. Citizens for Regional Transit advocates equitable transit including improved and expanded bus and rail transit through citizen involvement and education.

**Project:** In 2021 CRT was fortunate to have a High Roads Fellow develop a white paper focusing on equitable mobility and equitable Transit-Oriented Development (eTOD) along NFTA's long proposed transit corridor through Buffalo's East Side. Due to timing, the data and statistics gathered were based on the 2010 U.S. Census data as the 2020 U.S. Census would not be available until late 2021 and early 2022. This project would: a. Update the white paper with data, statistics, and charts to reflect more current community data using 2020 U.S. Census data. For context, this report builds a solid and convincing case for extending the existing Metro Rail into Buffalo's historically under-served and disproportionately impacted East Side in tandem with (or immediately after) the proposed Amherst extension. In broadest terms, the goal is to evaluate fair and redressive inclusion of communities of color in major government investments directed at WNY's transportation infrastructure, and to leverage this investment as a catalyst for private community and economic development along its length. The report provides helpful statistics to social justice advocates, community groups, and elected officials. b. The second part of the High Road Fellow project would be to meet with community groups (Block Clubs and Church/Mosque congregations) along the corridor to identify community transit needs, gaps in mobility access, destination data (where residents say they need to go), obtain feedback for better access to transit solutions, as well as gaps in community amenities needed (types of stores/services). The final goals would be an updated report and for the fellow to create, collect, and publish resident survey data for use in furthering CRT's mission to improve transit within the East Side LRRT corridor.



## Colored Girls Bike Too

[www.facebook.com/groups/coloredgirls biketoo](https://www.facebook.com/groups/coloredgirls biketoo)

**About:** Colored Girls Bike Too is a Black women-led radical cycling organization that centers (1) mobility liberation by advocating for (2) mobility justice in marginalized communities and the (3) healing of Black women (Cis and Trans), Black GNB folks, and other sis and sibs of color, by encouraging our sis and sibs to use bike commuting as Alternative Transportation, a tool of Self-Empowerment, Liberation, Advocacy, Visibility, and Holistic Health.

**Project:** CGBT's goals are to support folks on their bike liberation journey, as they commute to essential places and as they actively embark on their mental and physical wellness journey, both figuratively and literally. They work towards our goals by providing free bikes and bike equipment, bike workshops, social media learning, bike courier service, bike mentorship, and support, advocating for mobility justice, bike ride events, and social meetups. Currently CGBT is working on launching a mobility justice initiative for 2021-2022. Within that initiative our goal is to offer workshops or education salons on our work to the community and funders. We will also be launching additional projects, programs, and events that are a part of our mobility justice initiative, that are related to mobility justice, transportation and public spaces within the mobility justice initiative. One of those events will be around organizing a large summer event in 2022. While helping CGBT launch their mobility justice initiative, the fellow will also engage in communications and marketing, event outreach, and other essential tasks that will help grow CGBT. An additional goal, separate but related to our mobility justice initiative, is helping CGBT launch a campaign to obtain donated space for our mobility justice work and healing work. This will also provide us with office space. Finally, we will also be looking for grant and other sponsorship opportunities.

The Final Product(s) will be our summer event, a powerpoint presentation that provides information about who CGBT is and what we do, our challenges and our successes, and a work product will be helping CGBT finalize our Mobility justice initiative in a word/google doc form.



## Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

726 Exchange St, Suite 525 Buffalo, NY 14210 | <https://www.cfqb.org/>

**About:** For more than a century, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has enhanced and encouraged long-term philanthropy in the Western New York community. A 501 (c)(3) organization, the Community Foundation's mission is: Connecting people, ideas and resources to improve lives in Western New York. Established in 1919, the Community Foundation has made the most of the generosity of individuals, families, foundations and organizations who entrust charitable assets to the Community Foundation's care.

**Project:** According to health officials, there is no safe level of lead. Over the past 20 years, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels (EBLL) in Erie County, NY has continuously dropped. However, there is a persistent cohort of children with higher EBLLs that does not mirror this downward trend. The High Road Fellow would examine demographic data for children with initial EBLL's of 10-19 mcg/dl and those with 20+ mcg/dl to identify the characteristics of children in the two groups. Factors may include: age when EBLL identified; race; gender; physical address at time of elevation; etc.

Our partner in this work is the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH). ECDOH will provide instruction to the Fellow. ECDOH, in collaboration with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will provide historical demographic data for children with EBLs from the NYSDOH database LeadWeb. The project will be focusing on children whose initial elevations were 10-19 mcg/dl and those with initial elevations of 20+ mcg/dl. Consistent data trends since 2001 show the number of children with the lower elevations declining while the upper elevations have continued at the same level over the last 20 years. Understanding the characteristics of these two groups of children will enable the ECDOH to identify and implement strategies to reduce the incidence of lead poisoning at these levels. The deliverables for this project will include: a report of the demographic analysis of children with EBLs, maps of the locations where the EBLs occurred, charts to explain the findings, and presentation to the Lead Safe Task Force. This project presents a unique opportunity to explore the demographics of lead poisoned children in Erie County. We currently know that the majority of children with EBLs live in low-income communities of color, but we do not know the demographics of children with higher levels. If we can identify how they differ from children with lower levels, we can direct resources toward that population or physical area, so that children at higher risk can get the attention they deserve.

## ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project

464 Dodge St. Buffalo, NY 14208 | <https://ecbavlp.com/>

**About:** The Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc. (VLP) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation which provides free civil legal services to low income individuals and small not-for-profit groups in Western New York. VLP provides these important services by utilizing both its staff and volunteers to represent clients. VLP involves volunteer attorneys by recruiting, training, coordinating and assisting attorneys who volunteer to represent VLP's clients on a pro bono basis. VLP's dual mission is to: (1) provide quality, free civil legal services for low income people and smaller not-for-profit groups; and, (2) to effectively involve volunteers in the delivery of those services. VLP's efforts and results are noteworthy. In recent years, VLP has handles approximately 4,000 cases per year (in-house and referred to pro bono attorneys), while assisting more than 8,000 clients in total.

**Project:** The High Road Fellow will assess the effectiveness and outcome of the newly created Housing Court HUB. In December of 2021, we anticipate that a Housing HUB court will launch combining the eviction cases from all 38 town and justice courts in Erie County into 1 Virtual Housing Court "HUB" Part housed in Buffalo City Court. This pilot program is a joint effort between the 5 legal services providers in Erie County, the Courts and the Landlord's bar. We are hopeful that this new model will allow tenants in the more rural counties to have access to free legal representation and to allow for more consistency in outcomes. We also hope that this program is a first step in creating the foundation necessary for eventual universal representation for tenants facing eviction. We would like the fellow to work with the legal services providers to develop a report on the HUB court. This report would cover the creation, evolution and outcomes of this innovative model and hopefully provide us the data necessary to prove the model's usefulness and the need for replication in more counties throughout the state. This work will create a more equitable Buffalo because it will support our collective mission to provide access to justice for low-income people.





## Field and Fork Network

487 Main St. Suite 200 Buffalo, NY 14203 | [www.fieldandforknetwork.com](http://www.fieldandforknetwork.com)

**About:** Field & Fork Network (FFN) is a food and farming organization that connects communities to innovative solutions that foster a sustainable food system. FFN is building a thriving regional food system. Our focus is on economic development, food access, youth development and healthy neighborhoods. Since 2009, we've been creating more opportunities for local agriculture, providing greater access to food, building healthier neighborhoods and educating the next generation of food advocates.

**Project:** Field & Fork Network has been a leader in the development and implementation of the Niagara Falls Local Food Action Plan; a plan focused on strengthening the local and regional food system in an effective, proactive, and meaningful way by affecting policy and implementing programs that address food insecurity in the City of Niagara Falls, NY. The Plan includes 41 specific action items organized in a four-part framework that includes: Agriculture, Economic Development, Education and Healthy Neighborhoods. Healthy food is essential for a healthy life, and this statement is true regardless of socioeconomic status, race, creed, or any other factor. Food is a basic staple necessary for survival, and food access is a basic principle for equity in communities. Food access is also a social determinant of health and individuals with little to no access to healthy foods often experience a significantly higher rate of food-related health issues (obesity, diabetes, etc.). The purpose of the activities proposed as part of this application, and of the Niagara Falls Local Food Action Plan in general, is to increase levels of food security, thereby contributing to a more equitable Niagara Falls and region.

Each framework area also includes two to three subthemes. Within the Healthy Neighborhoods framework is a subtheme focused on Civic Engagement which includes a goal of ensuring that Niagara Falls is a place where citizens are engaged in environmental health and economic issues, as they relate to food systems and food access specifically. Field & Fork Network is excited about the opportunity to Partner with the High Road Fellowship to advance our work related to food advocacy and civic engagement. Project Goals include:

- Conduct research to identify best practices for the development of a community-based Food Advocacy Agenda (e.g. FoodLink's Food Advocacy Agenda)
- Develop and implement an outreach plan to engage Niagara Falls residents in the formation of a Food Advocacy agenda
- Assist with initial outreach to gather feedback from critical stakeholders (i.e., residents, partner agencies, government, etc.)
- Assist with identifying resources to provide community activism/organizing training; empowering residents to own the implementation of their Food Advocacy Agenda.

The Niagara Falls Local Food Action Plan was informed by more than 400 resident voices and was published in 2018. Of the 41 action items, there are three that could potentially fit in the Food Advocacy Agenda, based on the current needs and interests of the community. Those three action items are:

1. Residents advocate to the NFTA for changes in routes, safer drop-off locations, and improved policies.
2. Activate citizen advocacy surrounding grocery stores and food retail to keep prices fairly distributed.

3. Organize residents behind healthy food policies and programs, including clean air, soil, and water causes.

The final work product would be:

- Research report outlining best practices and food advocacy agenda models
- Outreach plan able to be used by project partners to engage the community in providing input for a food advocacy agenda
- Early data/input collected and catalogued
- Community organizing/activism training resource guide created



## Heart of the City Buffalo

191 North Street, Suite 1, Buffalo, NY 14201 | <https://hocn.org/>

**About:** Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to creating affordable housing programs for Buffalo neighborhoods, helping to improve and strengthen the community. Heart of the City Neighborhoods (HOCN) has worked together with residents, neighborhood organizations, financial institutions, and real estate professionals to make Buffalo's core communities a better place to live. While our original housing programs worked to increase homeownership opportunities, our most recent programming has made an effort to stabilize homeownership through repairing occupied housing, as well as ensuring tenants have increased access to safe, affordable housing opportunities. Between 1998 and 2019, HOCN's rehabilitation efforts invested over 26.5 million development dollars in Buffalo's core communities.

**Project:** The Housing Conditions Assessment Project will collect data to create an inventory of residential houses in the current targeted blocks under housing programs offered at Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. (HOCN.) A housing condition survey of the exterior of all residential properties on these select blocks will be conducted from the sidewalk/street.

This project will also incorporate research using census data, City Inspections data, and City/Erie County property ownership data to identify owner-occupied units that are in need of, and possibly eligible for, housing repair grants and loans. Research looking at the historical development and policies shaping development within these neighborhoods, as well as current and planned development, will be incorporated to help identify if there are blocks that need further support to maintain homeownership. By presenting a picture of the current housing conditions, as well as current demographics within these targeted blocks, HOCN can assess the effectiveness of past programs over the past 10 years, and the need for additional housing programs.

This work is a part of HOCN's work with the City of Buffalo's Community Partnership Initiative to offer home repair assistance grants and loans to owner-occupied households. Our current programs provide a lot funding to targeted blocks for home repairs that include lead risk assessments, roof replacement, siding repair, electrical service upgrades, plumbing and heating repairs and more in a whole house, comprehensive program.

The final work product will be an inventory and map of the owner-occupied houses and their conditions in the select Target blocks of the Niagara and Ellicott District, as well as recommendations for continuing focus on these block or moving focus to alternative blocks. We

envision this product as being one packet of information that our organization can reference and share with project funders, to best determine the funding needs for these blocks.

Homeowners located on Target blocks have access to CDBG and HOME funding through the City of Buffalo to make needed repairs to their homes in the form of a zero interest, partially or fully deferred loan. By taking a thorough assessment of these blocks in 2022, we can determine if a need for this funding still exists on these previously determined blocks, or if there are alternative blocks in these districts that could better benefit from these funds.



## Partnership for the Public Good

617 Main Street, Suite 300 Buffalo, NY 14203 | [www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org)

**About** The Partnership for the Public Good is working to build a more just, sustainable and culturally vibrant Greater Buffalo through action-oriented research, policy development and citizen engagement. With over 290 affiliated partners, PPG develops an annual Community Agenda of policy planks, hosts a weekly radio show, and produces publications and other resources to give the nonprofit community and citizens a stronger voice in public policy.

**Project:** Young people with mental health challenges and substance use challenges often end up in the punitive justice system, with increased contacts with police and increased rates of arrest that negatively impact their well-being and opportunities. For this project, the High Road Fellow will carry out research and support community engagement to help reduce police interaction and prevent the criminalization of young people with mental health and substance use challenges.

Together with a coalition of healthcare agencies, service providers, parent associations, and public advocacy groups, PPG is working to shift approaches to mental health and substance use response in Erie County. Many of our partners have raised the negative impacts of a punitive approach to mental health response and substance use disorders for adolescents and young adults. This coalition focuses on moving resources and programming in Erie County from punitive approaches-- including policing, detention, and court-based programs--toward healthcare and civilian response models.

As this coalition has called for, mental health emergencies across Erie County should be handled by trained mental health professionals, not police who lack the training to work with people (especially adolescents and young adults) in crisis. In non-police response to mental health calls, a social worker and/or a medic respond to calls without police (for non-violent incidents with no weapons involved). This is already being done in Denver; San Francisco; Eugene, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and is being started in Los Angeles and New York City.

The Fellow will work with the coalition to plan and organize public workshops and community conversations on needed shifts for mental health and substance use response. These sessions will feature programs and nationally recognized models from other cities, highlighting particular approaches that could be developed and implemented in Erie County.

PPG is currently finalizing a policy brief that details models for civilian mental health response in other cities, explains the current systems in Erie County for mental health response, and details the gaps in services. The High Road Fellow will carry out similar research, specific to substance use response for young adults and adolescents. They will map current programs available in

Erie County, and, informed by the Coalition, highlight alternative approaches that offer care outside of punitive systems.

This coalition aims to offer a comprehensive picture of what Erie County could do to ensure a non-punitive approach to adolescent/young adult mental health and substance use challenges, what is already done, what both professionals and residents want to see, and specific recommendations for best practices. While there is growing public interest in these needed shifts, there is less information available about best practices for both our service provider partners and our local decision-makers.

## Peaceprints of WNY

660 Smith Street Buffalo, NY 14210 | [www.peaceprintswny.org](http://www.peaceprintswny.org)

**About:** As a nationally recognized leader in reentry services for individuals involved in the criminal justice system, Peaceprints of WNY will leverage its expertise, passion for social justice, and innovative programming to empower individuals and advocate for equitable opportunities. Our mission is to strengthen communities by rebuilding lives.

**Project:** The rate of homelessness among formerly incarcerated individuals is up to 13 times greater than for the general public. A leading cause is the limited availability of affordable housing options, and the barriers to housing access. Continuing the tremendous work of our 2021 Highroad Fellow, the long-term goals of this project are (1) to advocate for governmental policies and screening guidelines regarding housing people with conviction histories, (2) to increase the number of private landlords and housing opportunities in Buffalo willing to rent to individuals with a criminal record, together decreasing rates of homelessness among reentering individuals. In the short-term, efforts will be made to (1) identify and grow the existing network of landlords and housing agencies in WNY, (2) understand their perceived fears and apprehensions about renting to formerly incarcerated individuals, (3) address and mitigate perceived concerns and educate neighbors and policy makers about the community benefits of stably housing returning people.

To achieve these goals, the High Road Fellow will be asked to continue to grow a directory of local landlords, housing providers, and nursing homes/supported care facilities in Buffalo that are available to formerly incarcerated individuals. Further, the 2022 High Road Fellow will conduct interviews with the decision makers in the directory to document current rental policy surrounding the screening and application process to formerly incarcerated people and to understand the perceived fears and barriers to renting to returning people. The directory and report combined will be used by Peaceprints in executing large-scale community meetings surrounding the issue and informing the approach to policy change. If we are successful in increasing access to stable and affordable housing opportunities, employment opportunity, mental and physical welfare, and community connection among the returning population will increase drastically, while the rates of homelessness and risk of recidivism will decrease. By enfranchising this significant population, families, neighborhoods, and our WNY community at large will be brought stability, prosperity, and hope.



## Restoration Society, Inc.

66 Englewood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14214 | <https://rsiwny.org/>

**About:** Restoration Society, Inc. programs are rehabilitation communities founded upon the recovery vision that all individuals can lead active lives filled with hope and satisfaction and make valuable contributions to our community.

**Project:** This project is part of an effort to increase visibility and outreach through marketing efforts. This is not part of a coalition, although Restoration Society relies heavily upon a number of collaborations. Social media is a successful method for outreach and marketing. This project will increase our efforts through social media, other media methods including press releases, and other printed materials such as posters and brochures. There are a number of departments within RSI and this project will bring them all together. RSI also operates in three different counties and this project will again help to keep operations consistent and increase visibility. The final project will resemble a media campaign for the agency that promotes services for customers and also increase hiring efforts by promoting the work environment at RSI. This media/marketing piece will also be shown to current employees to reinforce our efforts.



## Shared Mobility, Inc.

640 Ellicott Street #441 Buffalo, NY 14203 | <https://www.sharedmobility.org/>

**About** We believe that affordable, accessible, and equitable mobility is a Human right. We strive everyday to help build innovative shared transportation programs with local partners across the country that help uplift the communities they serve.

**Project** Shared Mobility Inc. (SMI) was founded in 2009 as Buffalo CarShare, the nation's first social-equity focused shared mobility program. Since that time, SMI has transitioned its focus to creating equitable, affordable, and accessible programming across the shared mobility spectrum. Presently in Western New York, SMI is the operator of the Reddy Bikeshare system as well as the facilitator for an E-Bike Library Pilot that provides members of the program free access to pedal-assist e-bikes at select hub locations. SMI is continually working to expand its programming with a community controlled focus.

Moving into 2022, SMI is looking to examine pathways for the growth of these programs. The fellow will work with SMI to first establish an understanding of the current impact of these programs. Following this, the fellow will work with the SMI team to identify additional community-based organizations in the region that would be able to facilitate and support the growth of these programs in disadvantaged communities as well as funding sources that could be used to make this growth possible. SMI seeks a fellow that is able to take an intersectional approach to understanding how access to mobility options affects community-level outcomes and can evaluate funding and partnership opportunities to accentuate the work presently underway on these projects. The fellow's final deliverable will come in the form of a written report to SMI's staff detailing their findings as well as a presentation about the work to staff and associated program partners. By enhancing SMI's capacity to build and expand equity-focused

micromobility options locally, the fellow will have a direct positive impact in building the foundation for this work moving forward. Identification of funding sources, potential partners, and programmatic best practices all fall in line with the organization's proven strategy to develop and deploy equitable shared mobility programs in Buffalo and across the nation.



## South Buffalo Community Association

35 Cazenovia St. Buffalo, NY 14220 | <https://www.southbuffalo.org/>

**About** The mission of the South Buffalo Community Association is to maintain and enhance the general cultural, social and recreational well-being of the neighborhoods of South Buffalo through human service programs. These programs include, but are not limited to the elderly, youth services, recreational programs for all ages, plus information and referral.

**Project** The South Buffalo Community Association is nearly 45 years old and has been operating the Tosh Collins Community Center for more than half that time. As a community center, we need to survey and assess the needs of the local community to determine the programs and services the residents need. The goal of this program is to compile a list of needs of the community to shape our 3 year strategic plan to better serve South Buffalo. The final work product will be a community needs assessment report and a presentation to the community. This report can be used to bring additional resources to the residents of South Buffalo, which is historically lower income and under resourced.



## Ujima Company, Inc.

429 Plymouth Ave., Suite 2, Buffalo, NY, 14213 | <https://ujima.squarespace.com/>

**About** Ujima is a Swahili word meaning “collective work and responsibility” and it is from this tenet that we derive our purpose. Ujima Company Inc. (UCI) is a multi-ethnic and multicultural professional theatre whose primary purpose is the preservation, perpetuation, and performance of African American theatre by providing working opportunities for established artists and training experience for aspiring artists. Ujima continues to use theatre to build the beloved community, shape and reflect our lives, participate in civic conversations, and serve as a vehicle for social change.

**Project** The High Road Fellow will help develop our Dunbar Youth Theatre Arts Program alongside our Program Director through research, creating marketing materials/plans, and evaluation of current programming. This program is an Ujima program but we often connect with other relevant work from community partners such as the Freedom Schools Buffalo coalition whom we worked with last summer. The fellow's final work product will be a development plan that will include all elements that the fellow worked on throughout the summer (research, marketing, evaluation, etc.) The Dunbar program is among the few completely free theatre arts training programs in Buffalo for youth. This provides the opportunity to under-resourced communities with young artists to develop their artistic skills and practices in a safe environment that connects them to even greater opportunities. The further development of this program will help to expand class sizes, lead to increase funding, and provide this opportunity to even more young artists beyond our current demographic.



## **WNY Council on Occupational Safety and Health**

2495 Main St, Suite 438, Buffalo NY 14214 | <https://wnycosh.org/>

**About** WNYCOSH is a worker safety and health advocacy and training organization. Over the past 41 years, WNYCOSH has built a membership base of labor union locals, health & safety activists, as well as many public health and legal professionals and individuals interested in occupational safety and health issues. WNYCOSH has empowered hundreds of thousands of workers, including young workers, refugee and immigrant workers, low-wage workers and workers in high hazard industries through direct training to identify, evaluate and control hazards in the workplace. In 2011, the WNYCOSH Worker Center was formed to provide a resource on workplace rights and health and safety for low-wage and vulnerable workers. Part of our mission includes language access and giving workers information about their rights in a language they can understand.

**Project** The NYS Hero Act provides permanent airborne disease standards for workplaces, as well as provisions for the formation of worker health and safety committees. The High Road fellow will work with Worker Center staff on projects related to the NY Hero Act. This will include working with low income workers on forming committees around health and safety issues in their workplace, and addressing those issues. They will also be involved with organizing infectious disease trainings and in delivering trainings, which may be presented in other languages depending on the audience. The goal of this project is to build power and knowledge around health and safety for workers, and to understand the challenges that workers face so that WNYCOSH can tailor its work to better address them, with a focus on the restaurant and hospitality industries. Other activities will include attending community events, coalition meetings, conducting outreach at community events (including at least one festival), and assisting with Worker Center calls. In addition to regular check-ins and reports on their work, the Fellow will produce a final summation of the work they do, including an analysis of what is and isn't possible under the NY Hero Act based on their experiences and conversations with workers, which will assist in future advocacy and organizing work.

As we continue to deal with COVID-19 and the changes it has brought to all of our lives, we also know that workers are more aware of health and safety issues at work than ever before. We are committed to making sure that all workers are knowledgeable about their rights at work and any hazards that they might face, and to pushing for safer, more equitable workplaces for all workers. The Hero Act provides a framework for a voice in the workplace that has not been easily achieved for non-union workers, especially for those in low-wage, temporary or contingent work. We believe that understanding your rights and how to utilize them for yourself and your co-workers is the best way to have power in the workplace, and the work the Fellow does alongside our Outreach staff will help build that power for low-income, vulnerable workers, including refugees and immigrants. One of the central pieces of our work is language access for workers throughout Western New York and the state, so that workers whose preferred language is one other than English are able to understand their rights, and advocate for themselves and their co-workers. The Fellow's work will contribute to our overall mission, but also help to ensure that we are understanding and meeting the changing needs of workers in Western New York.



## **WNY Environmental Alliance**

37 Franklin Street, 2nd floor Buffalo, NY 14202 | <http://www.wnyea.org/>

**About** The Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) is a coalition of independent organizations that collectively represents the environmental voice for the Western New York (WNY) Region, creating a virtual town square for all things green in Western New York. With more than 100 member organizations, affiliates and supporters, the WNYEA wants to ensure that the environment is the key factor in local and regional planning.

**Project** The Western New York Environmental Alliance has declared “A Decade of Biodiversity” as an overarching theme for the next decade. The organization intends to roll out the campaign over the coming months, bringing it to the attention of member, supporting and associate organizations and the broader community, and using it as a jumping off point for discussion and engagement around this critical topic and related themes including “Lights Out Buffalo,” “Biophilic Cities/Communities,” and climate change mitigation, reduction and resilience.

The High Road Fellow work will involve public relations and outreach activities including preparing communication materials for public workshops and social media release, setting up in-person or virtual workshops, recording and posting of workshop recordings including editing of captioning files, and support for new and renewing member organization recruitment using the Decade of Biodiversity theme as the foundation for a new and renewing member drive. Historically, the WNYEA had approximately 100 members in various categories. In recent years, that number has dropped to around 35 organizations. We feel this campaign will boost organization numbers and the associated impacts of coordination and collaboration in support of the diverse missions and goals participating organizations. A companion piece of this effort will be direct participation by the High Road Fellow in on-the-ground, landscape biodiversity and soil health assessments. These assessments will establish baselines for representative public or publicly accessible properties and will talking points for workshops and follow up activities.

Final work products will include a package of outreach materials; a minimum of two Decade of Biodiversity workshops (in person or virtual depending on COVID); informational and outreach contacts with current WNYEA members and with a minimum of 25 new or lapsed member organizations; at least 5 social media posts related to the campaign; a least three documented biodiversity assessments with associated results writeups, charts and related materials for use in future meetings, social media releases and web page postings. The products will be produced in electronically shareable formats, including the inclusion of development and use of graphic elements to help convey campaign messages in user-friendly, easily understood ways. Biodiversity assessments will follow protocols and formatting used by new WNYEA Board Member, Emere Nieves, who does this work routinely and professionally in her business, Gardeness, Inc..

The biodiversity crisis impacts us all but the scope and scale of the crisis is not well known or appreciated. By raising awareness in communities and social groups throughout the region, the WNYEA expects to promote a wide range of activities that, over time, will help reverse the decline in biodiversity, not only in less developed areas but, in particular, in the highly developed, more densely populated urban and suburban areas of Erie County and the WNY region. Too often, these activities focus on rural areas. By including biodiversity and soil health related assessments in urban environments, this project will help to demonstrate that there are biodiversity improvement opportunities in urban settings, too.



## **WNY Law Center**

37 Franklin Street, 2nd floor Buffalo, NY 14202 | [www.wnylc.net](http://www.wnylc.net)

**About** The WNY Law Center is a nonprofit legal services organization of legal professionals representing low-income people in a full range of civil matters. We engage in direct representation of homeowners facing foreclosure as well as advocacy and education in fair lending, consumer debt issues, preserving housing, and passing on generational wealth.

**Project** The Law Center does fantastic work every day but historically has not been great at reporting out on all the great work that is happening. To that end, this summer we'd like to have a High Roder work on compiling a report on the impact of our Vacant and Abandoned / Zombie work. We work with most municipalities in Erie County and get banks and investors to make the required improvements to their properties. This could be in the form of property repairs, new roofs, etc. While this work is important and has an impact on the physical wellbeing of neighborhoods, it would be helpful to be able to document the investment made in monetary terms. To that end, the work of the High Roder would be to research the cost of typically improvements we are able to get to properties and come up with a report of how much investment our work has generated in Erie County. This will help up not only keep our program going forward, but be an incentive for other municipalities to work with us more to address blight in their communities. We would also like to look at the long term impact on the surrounding neighborhood. We Chair the Erie County Clerk's ZOMBIES Initiative and the Distressed Properties Task Force in the City of Buffalo. This work is done in partnership with many other groups that address housing issues in the area including, but not limited to, Habitat for Humanity, Matt Urban Center, BENLIC, as well as state and local officials.

The final work product will be two fold. The first will be a document with average costs that our team can use to further track our impact after the High Roder leaves. The Second will be a report on the impact of our work on individual properties as well as the community at large. One thing we've discovered is that not all municipalities and even neighborhoods receive the same treatment when it comes to investment through the enforcement of the Zombie Foreclosure laws or even regular code enforcement. Our work has helped these laws be enforced in areas where they were previously unenforced due to lack of resources. This work will help ensure our important work can continue and help municipalities and communities see the value in collaborating with our office.



## **WNY Women's Foundation**

742 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209 | <https://wnywomensfoundation.org/>

**About** Our mission is to create a culture of possibility so each woman can live, grow, and lead to her fullest potential. Today, the Foundation creates a culture of possibility for women of all ages through advocacy, investments, and strategic initiatives. We strive for short- and long-term impact within each of our strategic focus areas: Affordable, accessible, and quality childcare; Family-sustaining jobs for women; Policies and programs that support working women; Equal representation for women in leadership positions.

**Project** The outlook for women in the workplace remains bleak, especially in the African American community. The number of female heads of household parenting children under 18 (Census 2020): City of Buffalo: 14.6k; 53.4% of total population; Erie County: 28.9K; 30.4% of

total population. In addition, 63% of families living in poverty in Buffalo are headed by women. A recent UB Center for Urban Studies report draws out the root problems facing minority women in Buffalo, specifically highlighting structural joblessness and low wages. Household income in these homes will remain low without access to higher levels of educational attainment. Certificate-based workforce development programs, including high-touch support services, are greatly needed to improve access to living wage jobs especially those in the Healthcare and Information Technology fields.

The WNYWF is currently working with community partners to develop a holistic workforce development pipeline that leads to employment. The target populations are women, and single mothers. This two-part program includes the concept for the Workforce Development Consortium Center and the E2E Women's Economic Mobility Initiative. . The Workforce Development Consortium Center (WDCC) would provide a portable and flexible pathway for the most marginalized to secure meaningful employment opportunities. The WDCC would serve as a clearinghouse for determining and then connecting community members to workforce development programs that meet their specific needs. This single point of entry program will reduce barriers for individuals who face racial, systemic, and economic oppression, increasing choice and post-employment job retention. The main components are outreach, remediation, core skills training, employment and post-employment.

The Women's Education to Employment (E2E) expands our proven economic empowerment initiative, MOMs: From Education to Employment® model (in existence since 2014), to incorporate existing successful workforce development training programs. While MOMS is tailored to eliminate barriers and move single mothers toward completing a community college education, the E2E focuses on family sustaining jobs through workforce development certifications. The holistic and comprehensive E2E model also allows for a broader perspective incorporating resources, best practices, and knowledge from our partners in early childhood education, health, social services, and community development. The main components are support, education, empowerment, employment, and systems change.

This two-part initiative will seek to serve all of Buffalo and remove barriers to education and high-wage job attainment. The fellow would be coming into the program during the first year of WDCC and the second year of E2E. The High Road Fellow will work with staff in this initiative to gain an understanding of the program. From their experience, the will assess the program within workforce development and employer-based centers, with recommendations on how to improve and/or expand the program. The Fellow will provide a report that includes reviews of the Initiatives concepts, program facilitation, student/employee satisfaction, community supports/connections, and if this is truly meeting student need.

# DEMOCRACY SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS

Democracy Summer is designed for ILR undergraduate students interested in enhancing democracy through public service. Democracy Summer provides insight on the issues and access to leaders who are addressing major challenges *through government*. It provides a strong grounding in critical thinking, group dynamics, and problem solving. This summer, Democracy Fellows are considered High Road Fellows but their individual projects are coordinated with a specific public official instead of a not-for-profit organization.

One example of a potential Democracy Summer project this summer is to work with a local elected official and coalition on the Frontline Arts Organizations Sustainability Fund. We anticipate being at the implementation phase of the Frontline Arts Organizations Sustainability Fund, which is a \$2.5M seed fund allocation in the City of Buffalo's federal stimulus funding package for frontline arts organizations and artists. Frontline Arts Buffalo (FAB) was closely involved in seeing that fund proposal through, and we are hoping to use this 3 year spend-down fund as a pilot towards showing the need for the city to invest significantly in the arts and cultural sector. The High Road Fellow will assist with developing evaluation methods and measures that we can use to track impact, and leverage grantmaking in storytelling for us to build momentum around the work.



This painting, titled "Regrowth" (acrylic on paper) was created by Lizzie Taber (High Road '21) for the High Road Showcase.

The engine represents Buffalo's position as a rust belt city and Lizzie's placement with Citizens for Regional Transit. The sky represents the growth and potential Buffalo has.

The 22 Native New York plants associated with spring and early summer represent the 22 High Road Fellows and healthy, sustainable growth.

