September 13, 2019

Dear Employer,

The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) has set out to fight poverty in a meaningful way. Pervasive, long-standing, deeply rooted poverty is the greatest crisis the Rochester area has ever faced. Without a new approach, it will continue to get worse. Employers are a key partner in supporting our community and making it a better place for everyone to live and work. We are asking you to join us.

RMAPI's Employer Pledge provides an opportunity for employers in Rochester and Monroe County to commit to abiding by best practices in recruiting and employing individuals impacted by poverty. The best practices speak to workplace culture, hiring, retention, and promotion. In signing the pledge, employers are asked to identify one or more best practice(s) to focus on implementing in the next six months, and to develop action steps that will be taken toward that goal. Signing the pledge is a commitment to work towards upholding the spirit of all of the best practices, and taking concrete actions towards as many of them as you can over time.

RMAPI is a Collective Impact effort – RMAPI succeeds when everyone in the community succeeds. The signing of the pledge is the start of an ongoing relationship. As employers sign the pledge, we will create learning opportunities and provide support by connecting employers to each other and to other resources in the community. In time, we envision a recognition program, whereby we publicly recognize employers who truly live the best practices. There is also a companion pledge for Workforce Preparation Organizations (WPOs), and a parallel effort to support WPOs in improving partnerships with employers and preparing individuals for employment.

Additional information about the pledge and all of the identified best practices can be found at http://endingpovertynow.org/. For each best practice, we have compiled examples of what it could look like "in action," as well as explanations of how each practice ties to RMAPI's Guiding Principles. Check back often, as we will continuously update the information on the website as new employers join, and as we identify more examples of the best practices being implemented. If you have specific questions, please reach out to Rebekah Meyer, RMAPI Project Administrator, at 585.242.6430 or Rebekah.meyer@uwrochester.org.

Thank you for joining RMAPI in our community's fight to end poverty.

Sincerely,

Leonard Brock
Executive Director
RMAPI

Daan Braveman
Co-Chair
RMAPI

Jerome Underwood
Co-Chair
RMAPI
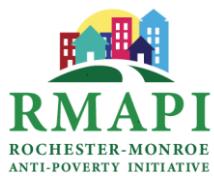
About RMAPI and the Employer Pledge

What: RMAPI's Employer Best Practices have been developed by RMAPI's Employment Working Group. The best practices are based on lived experience of working group members, a review of available research, and taking RMAPI's guiding principles into account. There is also a companion set of best practices for Workforce Preparation Organizations (WPOs).

Who: Any employer in the City of Rochester or Monroe County is invited to participate. We will particularly focus on employers with a large number of entry-level positions that are often filled by individuals coming from poverty. The pledge should be signed by someone in a leadership position – someone who can influence culture, policy, and practice at an organization.

Why: RMAPI is focused on reducing poverty and increasing self-sufficiency. Increasing income through sustainable employment is a key strategy in this work. We want to actively and productively facilitate effective partnerships between employers and WPOs to make this strategy a reality.

When: To start, we are asking for 6-month action commitments around one or more best practice(s). We know that changing policies, practices, and behaviors is hard and takes time, effort, and focus. By asking for one set of commitments to start, we will learn from each other and improve as we go. As employers sign on to the pledge, we will work to connect employers to each other and to resources in the community to learn from and connect to each other.

About RMAPI: RMAPI is a Collective Impact effort. This means that RMAPI focuses on collaboration and systems change, not programmatic efforts. The Employer Pledge is a means of fostering collaboration among employers in the area, and improving the system of how employers engage with low-income community members.

About the Guiding Principles: RMAPI's Guiding Principles are a key aspect of its work, and infuse everything it does. Employers pledging to RMAPI's best practices are also pledging to uphold the guiding principles.

Build and Support our Community: Help to rebuild struggling neighborhoods with quality support services to make them safe, healthy, and livable.	Address Structural Racism: End the activities and actions that continue racial inequality in public policies, institutional practices, and other cultural norms.	Address Trauma: Help to heal people and neighborhoods that are suffering from repeated experiences with trauma; provide support and services that are sensitive to traumatic experiences like abuse, addiction, and violence.

RMAPI Employer Pledge

_____ [employer name] pledges to combat poverty in the community by working towards improved internal policies and practices in alignment with one or more of the following best practices:

Workplace Culture

1. Intentionally design, revamp, and implement policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Hiring

2. Collaborate with workforce preparation organizations to meet business needs and maximize benefits for both the program participants and employers.
3. Develop recruitment and hiring practices that are responsive to the needs of the community.
4. Engage in critical reflection about hiring practices and make changes to improve equity, provide for flexibility in job requirements, and focus on individuals' capacity to learn.

Retention

5. Recognize barriers and common challenges to employment, such as the stress of unpredictable scheduling, and develop policies that provide consistency but allow for flexibility.
6. Develop comprehensive onboarding processes that provide clear expectations, mitigate barriers, and support long-term employee success and retention.

Promotion

7. Offer compensation which includes a living wage and comprehensive benefits in order to support employee well-being and alleviate the compounding effects of poverty.
8. Structure professional development and advancement opportunities so that career pathways, expectations, competencies, timelines, and means of access are clear to all employees.

We will also promote and uphold the RMAPI Guiding Principles:

Build and Support Our Community	Address Structural Racism	Address Trauma

In signing this pledge, _____ [employer name] commits to engaging with RMAPI and **identifying best practice areas of opportunity for improvement**, participating in learning opportunities with other employers, and developing an action plan for demonstrating progress in the next six months.

_____ _____ _____
Employer Representative Name   Signature & Date   Title

Contact Information (email, phone, and mailing address):
_____

Chosen Best Practice(s) and Action Commitments (attach additional pages if needed):
_____
_____

We can provide support to other employers looking to improve in the following best practice(s):
_____