

Cuyahoga County Equity Commission Meeting  
 February 15, 2024, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM  
 Cuyahoga County Administrative Building – Room 5-006  
 2079 East Ninth Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Cleveland, OH 44115

<b>Cuyahoga County Equity Commission</b>		
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Lockett	Lenora	Equity & Inclusion
Merriman	David	Health and Human Services
Nemastil	Sarah	Human Resources
Smialek	Jill	Public Safety and Justice Services
Johnson	Vaughn	Economic Development
<b>Guests</b>		
Denton	Cheryl	Clerk of Courts
Coleman	Kimberly	Human Resources
Murdock	Jamillah	Equity & Inclusion
Slayton	Shaunna	Equity & Inclusion
Bean	Jacob	Economic Development (Intern)
Botchway	Kwame	Village Capital Corp
Price	Nicki	College Now
Williams	Kaniece	College Now

- I. Welcome
- II. Call to Order (10:04 am) – David Merriman, Chairman
  - i. Roll call completed; previous minutes reviewed and approved.
  - ii. Call for Review & Approval of Minutes made by David Merriman.
    - Minutes approved: Motion to approve made by Lenora Lockett, seconded by Sarah Nemastil.
- III. Public Comment
  - There was no public comment.
- IV. Opening Remarks from Equity Commission Members
  - i. Jill Smialek- We are making progress on the workforce diversity program for first responders and public safety professionals across the community. We are trying to centralize information and resources regarding civil service testing and job postings that are available for Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management throughout the community. We want to try to streamline some of the testing processes. We also have our assistance to firefighters grant local match assistance. Funding comes through

Homeland Security; however, a local match is required. We were approved in our budget for this year to assist communities to make their local match when they apply for an AFG grant and we will be using the Equity Zones, as established by this group to make sure we are targeting our resources into communities that are at the highest level of need. Also, we are moving forward with an awareness campaign for the opioid settlement fund that we have. This awareness campaign will be targeting messages around the importance of harm reduction for people who are using recreational drugs. It's less about just saying no and more about if you are going to do this, there are safer ways. We are using zip code data to make sure the information is targeted into areas experiencing higher levels of opioid overdoses. We are also looking at data for Narcan deserts (areas where carrying Narcan is less common and access to Narcan is harder).

- ii. Vaughn Johnson- Currently, we are working with three minority developers with some significant projects under works. We continue to reach out to the 67 stimulus grant winners and partner them with additional resources. We have just wrapped up the Small Business supports RFQ, it is a \$3,000,000 competitive grant program that is spread out over 2 years to support the organizations that support minority business, with technical assistance and access to capital. The county does a lot of things, but we do not do technical assistance to small businesses or make micro loans. So, we fund those organizations that can provide those services and those programs to MBEs. In 2023 our Capital Partners reported, they helped 660 Minority Business Enterprises with technical assistance and funding (\$1.3 million in County funding). The Skill Up program has sunset, but I want to mention, since Skill Up's initial launch in 2017, almost 1500 Cuyahoga County residents were trained, nearly half of those are people of color. In April of 2023 we announced The Office of Small Business, we are close to announcing the formation and completion of it. Our office will have an MBE component.
- iii. Sarah Nemastil- Toward the end of the year, we started a pay equity study for all non-bargaining employees. We are diligently working and hoping the study is completed within the first half of 2024. I am participating in an executive coaching with Doctor Marlon Moore and other members of county leadership to learn how HR can facilitate county wide equity initiatives and how we can strategically work with the department of equity and inclusion, Health and Human services, PSJS and as well as our external boards and commissions to learn how we can best work together and use resources to implement these initiatives. Our talent team is exploring with Director Simeon Best how we can incorporate reentry initiatives into our workforce and talent acquisition strategy. Our Wellness platform launched on February 6th, and we are taking a holistic view of wellness this year. We are reviewing social determinants and equity barriers. February 13th County Council unanimously approved our expanded paid parental leave.
- iv. Kimberly Coleman- Our committee has been hard at work for the past couple of years. One of our signature initiatives is our panel discussion series called "Can We Talk... Conversations That Matter". We are looking forward to planning events that are focusing on how we can keep our DEI efforts strong in the current climate of attacks on the true meaning of DEI. We are looking forward to having that discussion towards the end of March. We are working towards putting together an employee resource group at Cuyahoga County, our Executive Administration is very supportive of this.
- v. Lenora Lockett- We have several initiatives that we are developing, implementing, and plan to implement. In January my staff and some training departments with HR, participated in train the trainers, so we can provide sustainable DEI training to county

employees and managers. We are also proceeding with our annual, What's Next kickoff, it continues the principle of All In. It is scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup>. The content for this is based on the survey that was a part of the January "In the Know". The topics of desire by employee response were work life balance at 50.9%, workplace accountability at 29.6%. We plan to have classes and work webinar sessions in September. Also, we are working on the county vendor fair. Last year we did the vendor fair in July. There was a positive response and participation. This year we will have it three times, April 11<sup>th</sup>, July 18<sup>th</sup> and October 17<sup>th</sup>. We are looking at Tri-C providing a poverty simulation for the county. We are also looking at a Kaizen event, so that we can do an efficient process of adding the equity lens to our processes. Also, we are going to have the Mid-year Equity Summit in June. Based on the train the trainer, we will be creating our schedule for those trainings in the latter part of the year.

- vi. David Merriman- Yesterday we launched the county's first welcome center. This new approach will lead the county into, I think, a national space that is race, ethnicity, immigration status forward. We are saying to the nation, we are a place where folks want to be and when they come here, they should have easier access to our benefits and services. This service will be offered from 9:30 in the morning to 4:00 Tuesday-Thursday. We are partnering with an organization called Resource, FKA Refugee Response. They have been contracted to create navigators that help new residents to the county find out what benefits and services are available to them, how they can find employment, address housing barriers, and other barriers that they experience. We want to thank the County Executive, this is something he said is a priority for him, to make the county more welcoming. and he pushed on this, and we were able to establish a new national certification. We are now a welcoming community second county in Ohio, one of the few counties in America that have now been designated a welcoming community. We will be launching an RFP later this year at Health and Human services. We have a contract for language access. While part of our intent is to meet the compliance responsibilities that exist for us, we are held to a high standard by the federal government as well as the state. We want to ensure our clients have full access to the service regardless of their language. Also, we want to go beyond that expectation and start to address the culture of our employees, the culture of our interactions with the public and communities and try to have this be a much more inclusive and easier to access office environment. I want to also thank Sarah Nemastil, as well as Nora Hurley in the law department, we completed our negotiation with AFSME 1746. I appreciated HR's coming to the table with comps from around the state that really pointed to our ability to offer the same high-quality compensation. We have begun a pilot and have a new approach where we are going to be looking to have some part-time staff employed by the county that will be in the community doing voter awareness and voter access. These are Health and Human service employees. We already have a service and a team that does this, we are going to grow it this year. I want to acknowledge; we have a new functioning wellness platform. HR did an outstanding job listening to feedback from user departments. The new vendor seems to be much more responsive and innovative in how they present services and more importantly to be drawing connections.
- V. Village Capital Corporation – Economic Impact to MBEs
    - i. Director Kwame Botchway - Power Point attached.
  - VI. College Now Mentoring Program
    - i. Nicki Price and Kaniece Williams – Power Point attached.

VII. Closing Remarks

VIII. Adjourn (11:03 am)

*Next Scheduled Meeting: May16, 2024 at 10:00am*

# Village Capital

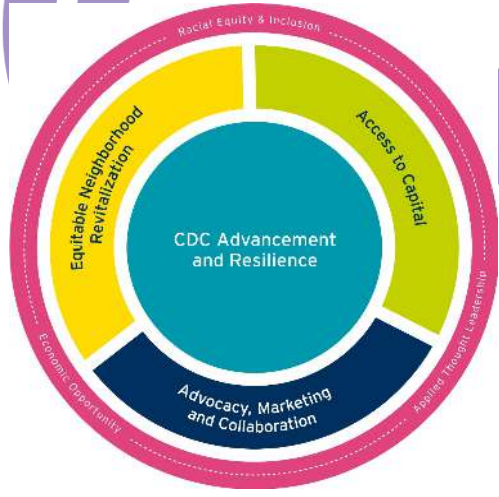


## VCC EQUITY PROGRAMS UPDATE - 2024

Presented by Kwame Botchway  
Village Capital Corporation

Presented to the Cuyahoga County Equity Commission Presentation  
February 15, 2024

# Village Capital



- Village Capital Corporation (VCC) is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). VCC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress.
- Since its inception, VCC has invested over \$120 million in Cleveland neighborhoods and leveraged over \$ 1 billion in private capital. Additionally, VCC has helped create or preserve over 850 housing units and over 392,000 sq. ft. of commercial space.

**Strategic Mission**

- Improve the quality of assets, amenities, and facilities in Cleveland neighborhoods through strategic investments
- Increase generational wealth through homeownership and commercial real estate ownership and operation
- Support the growth and development of minority and woman-owned real estate contracting and development firms
- Provide access to capital for neighborhood-based small businesses and entrepreneurs through CDC conduits

**CNP- Strategic Framework**

## OUR EQUITY JOURNEY

- Equity is integral to VCC's organizational DNA and operations
- Over its 32-year history VCC has made significant investments in historically disinvested communities in the Greater Cleveland region
- In the past five years VCC has been intentional in its equity programming and operations
- In 2021 VCC was selected to be part of the five-member International Economic Development Council's Equity Communities Cohort
- In 2022 VCC completed and is currently implementing its **Equity Action Plan**



## OUR EQUITY COMMITMENTS

- **"Grow U" & Black Woman-Owned Business Accelerator**
- **Cleveland Equitable Development Initiative [EDI]**
- **Contractors on the Rise (COR)**
- **International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Equity Communities**



## “GROW U”

- Grow U is “the client’s university.”
- This program pairs small businesses with VCC’s Entrepreneur-In-Residence to develop their personal learning and growth plan and provides tools and resources, available through VCC or its partner networks, to help clients meet their goals.
- VCC’s coaching and counseling is assisting businesses with new product launches, business expansions, and investment readiness.
- Grow U is also the home of Village Capital’s Black Woman-Owned Business Accelerator.
- This program was seeded with grant funding from the Cuyahoga County



## CONTRACTORS ON THE RISE (COR)

- COR is a developmental program for residential rehabilitation companies.
- The program provides each business with up to a \$250,000 line of credit for acquisition and repair.
- Participants also benefit from peer learning circles, assistance with project budgeting and planning, and a suite of wrap-around training sessions delivered by industry professionals.
- Currently on the second cohort of the program with plans to launch third in Q4 2024
- Each cohort comprises 7 contractors
- Contractor rehab footprint covers Cleveland and the inner ring suburbs



# CLEVELAND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (EDI)

- Cleveland EDI seeks to build a strong core of well-trained commercial real estate developers.
- EDI is a selective, cohort-based program that offers a rigorous eight-month classroom training curriculum delivered by national and local experts and coupled with mentorships from seasoned developers.
- Participants bring to the cohort an actual development project or concept that is refined over the program term and vetted by potential investors for funding.
- Each cohort member is paired with a seasoned developer for mentorship



## OUR IMPACT

### Impact milestones

- Launched the “Grow U” program, scaled and created greater synergy with community partners
- Leveraged for additional funding over \$3million including ARPA allocations from City of Cleveland
- Additional staffing - Small Business Coach on staff
- Assisted over 100 small businesses – 92% of these are minority-owned and led
- Over \$3.6 million committed in loans to MBEs
- Over \$2.7 million in loans made for construction
- 22 single-family homes rehabbed (including under construction) across the Greater Cleveland area through COR



### 2023 VCC Impact





**CONTACT**

**Village Capital**



**Kwame Botchway**  
Director, Community Impact & Innovation



**THE COLLEGE NOW  
MENTORING  
PROGRAM**

# ABOUT COLLEGE NOW

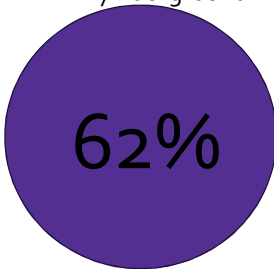
College Now's mission is to increase postsecondary educational attainment through college and career advising, financial aid counseling, and scholarship and mentoring services.



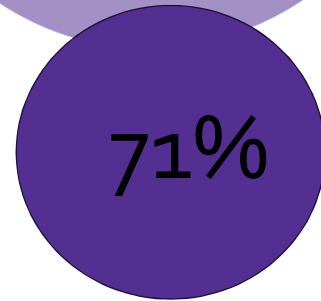
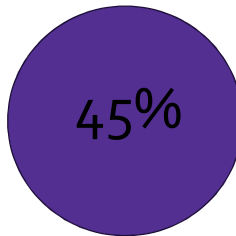
## MENTORING TO GRADUATION

### On-Time Graduation Rate

Overall Graduation Rate  
Any Background



For Pell Grant Eligible Students



College Now Mentoring Program

## CHANGING THE CALCULUS

Say  
Yes!  
Cleveland



United Way of  
Greater Cleveland



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## HOW IT WORKS

- 1700 Students and Mentors
- Onboarding between 500 600 annually
- Multi Year Match



Structure of the program:

- Matched with **ONE** student
- Messaging: **two messages per month** via online platform
- Meetings: pairs meet **three times per academic year**



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### Student success

71% of students who were mentored graduated on-time

### Regional impacts

*NEO is the real winner*



### Mentor development

*Improve your skills and expand your network, while paying it forward*

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### QUOTES FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR MENTORS

The College Now folks do a great job of pairing mentors and mentees with common interests -Higher Ed

This is the first year I have participated in the program and I am so impressed with how organized it is and how much support I receive as a mentor. As with most volunteer opportunities, I feel like I am getting so much more than I'm giving. - Business Development



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## QUOTES FROM STUDENTS (INSERT QUOTES PHOTOS)



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## Partner with us!

### Next Steps

Apply Online

<http://collegenowgc.org/become-a-mentor>

30-Minute Phone Interview

30-minute orientation  
(virtual)



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# SIGN UP FOR MORE INFORMATION

College Now Mentor Program



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CONTACT US



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Mentor Recruitment Manager

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### Madeline Rife

Senior Director of the Mentoring Program

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### Kaniece Williams

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Mentor Recruitment

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[HTTP://CNGC.ORG/APPLYTOMENTOR](http://CNGC.ORG/APPLYTOMENTOR)



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**THANK YOU!**

