

For Immediate Release  
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## Kansas City Receives Federal Funding to Provide Paid Internships to Help Unemployed Young Adults Find Jobs and Further their Education

(Kansas City, MO)----It's called Social Innovation. Can innovative programs designed to tackle the underlying causes of poverty, that appear to be working in New York City, make a difference in other parts of the country as well? We're about to find out. Five promising anti-poverty programs aimed at advancing the education, workforce skills, employment and financial literacy of low-income individuals and families will be replicated in eight urban communities, to further study their effectiveness. One of the programs, called Project Rise, will be tested here in Kansas City.

United Way of Greater Kansas City, in cooperation with the Mayor's Office of Kansas City, Missouri, announced today that they are partnering with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and seven other cities to test a set of innovative new programs. The work will be supported by a grant from the federal Social Innovation Fund. Administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the cities received a \$5.7 million annual grant to test these projects over the next five years.

Project Rise is designed to re-engage young adults (ages 18 to 24), who are not working or going to school, by placing them in paid internships and encouraging them to continue their education. The goal is to better prepare them to enter the workforce. Significant numbers of "disconnected" young adults do not have a high school diploma or GED, which is a nationally-recognized indicator of long-term economic hardship.

The Social Innovation Fund is a new tool to leverage public and private resources to test and expand effective community-based solutions. The three-year budget for Project Rise-Kansas City is \$3.8 million, which includes \$700,000 in federal money from the Social Innovation Fund, \$720,000 from The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and \$525,000 from United Way of Greater Kansas City. United Way and other local community partners will be working to raise approximately \$300,000 in additional funding for the project over the next three years. Additional support for technical assistance and evaluation will be provided by national funders.

The focus of the Kansas City initiative will be to study how the placement of unemployed, under-educated young people in educational activities and short-term paid internships improves their long-term economic opportunities. Through structured internships, participants will gain valuable work experience, job readiness skills, be able to explore possible careers and further their education. Following the internship, participants will be placed in unsubsidized jobs or educational/advanced training programs.

Project Rise is modeled after similar young adult programs previously launched in New York City. Kansas City is one of three cities involved in the national collaboration testing Project Rise. By working together, the cities hope to build a national body of evidence in support of promising programs that can be used to inform future policy and investment.

Kansas City Mayor Sly James said, "I'm proud that Kansas City was chosen as one of the pilot communities for this initiative. This is an excellent example of the collaboration taking place in Kansas City between public and private interests to eradicate poverty from our City and gives hope to those who

need it most. Ignoring the problems afflicting this demographic of this community won't get us anywhere. By investing in at-risk young adults, we are sending the message that they are valuable members of our community.”

Two local nonprofit organizations will be implementing Project Rise's education internships: Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph and the Full Employment Council. Approximately 50-75 disconnected young adults are beginning orientation and education activities in August, with placement at internship sites expected by September.

In Kansas City, large numbers of young adults face significant challenges in finding meaningful work and launching a positive career:

- More than one in four older teens and young adults, between the ages of 16 and 24, lives in poverty (12,890),
- Nearly one in 10 of this age group drop out of high school without graduating (4,850),
- One in 10 of the 16 to 24-year-olds has no job and is not enrolled in school or college (4,980).

UWGKC President & CEO Brent Stewart says, “This exciting opportunity closely aligns with and will become part of United Way's *Decade of Difference* initiative launched last year. At United Way, we are committed to innovation that leads to greater results during the critical decade of ages 16 to 26, when young people across our region are entering adulthood. Research tells us it is a decisive time in the life cycle to lay the foundation for escaping poverty and establishing life-long success – not only for these young adults, but also their children.”

The cities participating in this Social Innovation Fund grant include New York City, NY; Memphis, TN; Newark, NJ; Cleveland, OH; Youngstown, OH; San Antonio, TX; and Tulsa, OK. Each city is replicating one or more promising programs previously developed by the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), a government agency that designs and tests innovative anti-poverty programs. CEO, the Mayor's Fund and the partner cities are working with MDRC, a nonprofit education and social research organization that is serving as the lead evaluator.

Mayor James today announced the appointment of a 10 member Project Rise Advisory Committee. The group of community champions will promote the concept of serving older, disconnected, extremely high risk youth and oversee the parameters of this initiative.

Members of the advisory committee are: **Allison Bergman** - Lathrop & Gage; **Erika Brice** – Youth; **Andres M. Dominguez** -Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City; **Patrick “Duke” Dujakovich** - Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO; **Dr. Janice Ellis** - USARiseUp.com; **Tracy McFerrin Foster** - Hall Family Foundation; **Jo Ann Gabbert** – United Way of Greater Kansas City; **Kevin W. Kelly, Ph.D.** – Metropolitan Community College Institute for Workforce Innovation; **Nancy Seelen** – St. Luke's Hospital; **Linda N. Winter** - Arnold Newbold Winter & Jackson, P.C.

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