

Economic Recovery Corps Fellow Joins Partnership, Undertakes Project on Housing, Childcare and Transit

By Emily Younger Barnwell

Dedicated to the Wichita region's economic development and workforce initiatives, the Partnership has been selected by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) to host an Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) fellow.

Angeline Johnson, one of 65 fellows in the program's first cohort, began her 2.5-year fellowship on Feb. 1. Collaborating with the Partnership and its Talent Team, Johnson, a Toledo, Ohio native, will act as a catalyst in removing barriers to economic success across housing, childcare and transit in the Wichita region.

"To be given the opportunity to advance work that will focus on maximizing community impact in the realms of affordable housing, childcare and regional transit means that my efforts will allow for seeds to be planted that can be nourished to grow into remarkable efforts that can change the trajectory of not only the region but of the lives of both individual and families in this community," emphasized Johnson.

With more than 25 years of community development experience and previous service as a FUSE Corps fellow for the City of Wichita, Johnson will collaborate with key stakeholders within the Partnership, City of Wichita, Child Start, Wichita State University and other organizations. Together, they will research and implement solutions while leveraging funding opportunities.

"This role will allow for additional perspective to be brought into community efforts currently in place to address these issues. Through my engagement at these tables of influence, additional resources can be added to these efforts that have the potential to deepen community impact, initiative effectiveness and longevity," Johnson explained.

Cultivating lasting solutions in affordable childcare, housing and transit will not only relieve the strain on working parents but enhance the financial stability and mobility of the regional workforce, a strategic priority of the Partnership's Talent Team outlined in the Talent Roadmap.

"It means I get to wake up every day to focus on doing the work necessary to be a true difference maker for others," Johnson said.

The IEDC held an initial training for the fellows, agency hosts and partners in Portland, Oregon Feb. 12-15. The training included panel discussions, robust roundtable discussions, workshops and networking events.

"It was reiterated to fellows and agencies that these are long-term efforts that will take time and I learned that because of that, celebrating incremental progress is important," she said.

Launched in 2023 through a $30 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), the ERC is designed to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in distressed communities and regions throughout the United States.

The Partnership was selected from more than 500 host applicants to serve as one of the 65 host organizations. The host sites are located across 44 states, four tribal communities and two U.S. territories. Project needs represent the interconnectedness that economic development has with the pressing needs including workforce development, entrepreneurial ecosystem building, housing and childcare, broadband, access to capital and more. Each project, including the Partnership's, received a dedicated fellow who is funded for 2.5 years.



The cohort of fellows will meet again in May for further training and education about federal funding opportunities related to each fellow's respective projects.