

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS TO SET THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC STABILITY

USI Case Study 2019

CLIENT SITUATION

Securing long-term employment has been a continued challenge across the populations the non-profit serves. For example, the average unemployment rate for St. Louis residents is 35 percent. Building relationships with local companies has been the most effective method for our client to acquire long-term employment opportunities. Yet, developing these partnerships has proven challenging because:

- The national stigma often placed on neighborhoods of color created a lack of employer interest.
- Shifts in direction due to a new CEO influenced team dynamics, communications, and strategic focus.
- The non-profit had not fully developed alliances with local employment organizations to share coordinated training and hiring efforts.
- Longstanding community misperceptions, stemming from the non-profit's close relationship with one partner, underscored the need for brand differentiation and a more diversified portfolio.
- A gap in understanding how to improve economic mobility processes and build productive corporate partnerships.

northhighland
WORLDWIDE CONSULTING

Our pro-bono client, a non-profit organization headquartered in St. Louis, MO, and with independent locations nationwide, has served families and individuals for the past four decades. It acts as a connector to match at-risk residents with services for economic stability and advancement. Today, it assists more than 100,000 people in 19 cities by providing help with housing, health, education, economic mobility, and policy influence.

Focused on setting a strong foundation for economic stability, our goal was to enhance how the organization creates and nurtures business relationships to create a consistent pipeline of family-sustaining job opportunities.

OUR APPROACH

The North Highland team applied growth assessment, data & analytics, program delivery, and people-centric change management methodologies to equip the non-profit organization with a three-year strategy roadmap. Anchored on economic stability, we developed nine strategies and a collection of enabling tools and processes to support key objectives.

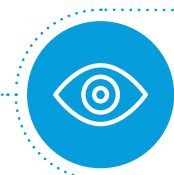
Following an in-depth evaluation of the organization's current business practices and resources, North Highland gained insights from local corporate and civic leaders to gauge perception of the organization and the existing biases that prevented the hiring of low-income individuals. We combined interviews with existing and potential partners with extensive research of best practices in non-profit and corporate affiliations.

Our team then completed an analysis of factors preventing residents from securing meaningful job opportunities. Our analysis shed light on 20 factors, some of which we deemed "transparent" because they weren't readily visible but had significant underlying impact on residents. By identifying ways to eliminate or greatly minimize these hurdles, we showed that removing obstacles, as well as promoting a clear path forward, are the keys to lasting change.

In addition, because the non-profit was a national organization with a local footprint, our analysis uncovered alignment challenges with local organizations. Using our Experience Design capability, we conducted a brand audit from both internal and external perspectives. Results informed brand enhancement recommendations that will amplify the organization's visibility, rectify common misperceptions, and build community trust through authentic engagement.



BRAND
ENHANCEMENT



ORGANIZATION'S
VISIBILITY



RECTIFY COMMON
MISPERCEPTIONS



BUILD COMMUNITY
TRUST

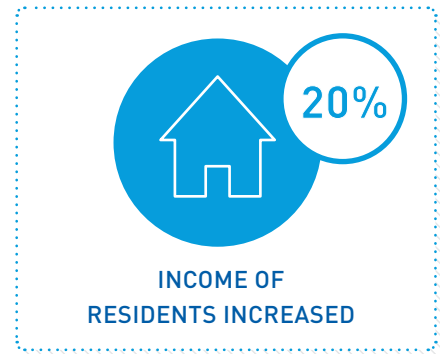
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VALUE DELIVERED

Ultimately, we armed the client with an unbiased, strategic view into one of its most important service values: economic mobility. By applying probing analytics and experience in organizational transformation, we equipped the organization to better serve thousands of individuals and families across the nation.

Our engagement culminated in the adoption of several foundational changes by the non-profit's leadership:

- Senior leaders will increase the level of active participation with their St. Louis team to underscore the importance of securing employment for residents.
- The organization will pursue actions to further differentiate and diversify its relationships with long-time partners. Empowered by lasting capability, the non-profit is now equipped to “lift and shift” examples of successful business alliances across its other U.S. offices.
- Bolstered by our action-forward strategic plan, the leadership team has applied our recommendations in a pilot community. Through alignment and collaboration with employment partners, the local team has increased the income of residents by 20 percent and employment by 25 percent.



ABOUT NORTH HIGHLAND

North Highland is a leading change and transformation consulting firm, recognized for its deep expertise and collaborative, action-oriented approach. Invested in our **client's success** and powered by the belief that **everything begins and ends with people**, we bring together the brightest minds to create **positive change** and **transform businesses** through **customer, workforce and operational** lenses.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., and regularly named a best place to work, North Highland is an employee-owned firm with more than 5,000 consultants worldwide and 70+ offices around the globe. The firm is a member of Cordence Worldwide (www.cordenceworldwide.com), a global management consulting alliance. For more information, visit northhighland.com and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).