



July 2022 – December 2023

# Impact Report

**We foster belonging where it matters most. Let's  
build it together.**

@belonginutah #belonginutah

# Building a Utah where belonging unlocks our collective potential

The Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging (the Center) connects Utah's communities with the resources they need to foster belonging where it matters most: our education, workforce, housing, and health.

We functioned as the 501c3 Foundation of the Economic Development Corporation of Utah until June of 2023, when we became an independent 501c3.




# Our Team

## The Center Staff



 **Ze Min Xiao**  
President and CEO



 **Robert Roake**  
Director of Operations  
and Programming



 **Bailey Rivera-Wymes**  
Special Project Manager

## Our Board of Directors

**Byron Russell**  
Founding Principal Partner at Byron Russell  
LLC

**Deneiva Knight**  
External Affairs Director at Comcast

**Michael Gallegos**  
Former Division Director for Salt Lake County  
Division of Housing and Community  
Development

**Ian Shelledy**  
Chief Operating Officer at the Community  
Foundation of Utah

**Jenny Mayer-Glenn**  
Director for University Neighborhood Partners  
& Special Assistant to the President for  
Campus Community Partnerships, University  
of Utah

**Nubia Peña**  
Senior Advisor on Equity and Opportunity,  
Office of Governor Spencer J. Cox, & the  
Director for the Utah Division of Multicultural  
Affairs

**Thomas Morgan**  
Director and Executive Vice President of  
Retail, Business Banking and Omni Channel  
Banking at Zions Bank



# Letter From Our President & CEO

The Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging (the Center) is committed to fostering belonging in the areas where it matters most— and where we most need each other: our education, economy, housing, and health.

Working in partnership with community members, the Center has worked to elevate belonging as an integral ingredient to Utah’s prosperity. Belonging is more than just having access; it is about the power to co-create the structures that shape a community. We have worked to create the infrastructure to bridge communities – deepening existing relationships and bringing together unlikely partners to work towards collective progress. By aligning decisions with community wisdom, we have co-created actionable, strategies to close critical opportunity gaps.

We’re proud of what we have accomplished together in just two short years. However, this is just the beginning. Our strength is our community. Thank you for trusting us to be a part of our collective journey - where the collective “We” is fundamental to a strong society.



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**Ze Min Xiao**

President and CEO

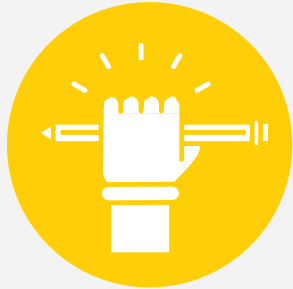


## What We Do

By aligning strategic decisions with community wisdom and through bonding and bridging, we are building a Utah where every one of us can contribute our whole selves.



# Our Focus



## **First-Rate Education**

When students receive an education that improves their skills and confidence, they are more engaged, academically successful, and emotionally and socially whole.



## **Energized Economy**

When individuals do work that fulfills their sense of purpose and financial goals, their performance, satisfaction, and health improve.



## **Dignified Housing**

When residents of all backgrounds can find homes that make them proud and keep them safe, all of our children and families are safer, healthier, and more connected.



## **Vibrant Health**

When everyone can comfortably get the care they need when they need it, we can all show up in our schools, jobs, and communities with more strength, courage, and pride.



# Our Approach



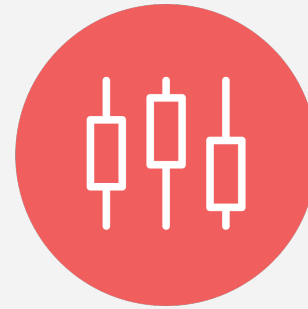
## **Bridge**

We seat community at the table.



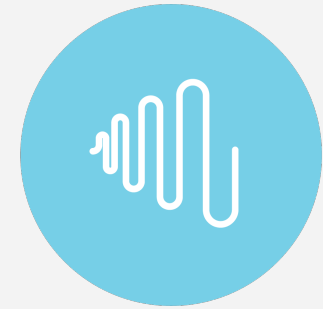
## **Invest**

We accelerate community-led solutions.



## **Evaluate**

We learn, document, and adjust.



## **Scale**

We amplify what works.



# Our Promise

- Communities come first.
- Everyone has a role to play.
- Disagreement doesn't stop collaboration.
- Every mistake makes us better.
- The journey is our focus.





# Our Impact

Building a Utah where every student receives a first-rate education. Every individual reaches economic fulfillment. Every family finds a dignified place to live. Every person gets the healthcare they need to thrive. Where every one of our successes expands our collective potential – because each of us belongs.



# **Bridging:** We cultivate bridge building to create belonging.


Over the past year, we convened **five conversations** with over **200 participants**, from across sectors, committed to this journey of exploring our shared humanity and unity.

At one convening, *A Conversation with Professor John Powell and Dr. Arthur Brooks: Bonding and Bridging Across Society*, we brought together two individuals, seemingly on opposite sides of the political spectrum, to talk about love and compassion.

WELCOME


## BONDING AND BRIDGING ACROSS SOCIETY

A Conversation with University of Utah Impact Scholar




**Arthur Brooks**  
University of Utah  
Impact Scholar

&



**John Powell**  
Othering & Belonging  
Institute

**BE A BRIDGE BUILDER**  
▶ Take the Event Survey



BYU Office of Belonging | THE CENTER FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & BELONGING | Sam C. Gardner POLICY INSTITUTE THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH | SUTHERLAND | Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs



# Communities: We seek out and elevate community voices.

Our goal is to make sure that everyone who influences the community's well-being is learning directly from them.

## Raise Up Utah

Helped raise funds and build capacity for [Raise Up Utah](#), an advocacy network supporting the role parent and community engagement play in student academic achievement.

Convened **200+ community members** from across the Wasatch front to produce priority topics to increase student success.

## Utah Digital Opportunity Network

Established the [Utah Digital Opportunity Network](#) (UDON) to support ongoing community inclusion in Utah's digital equity and high-speed internet expansion planning. It also helps to build service provider capacity while offering community-centered guidance to mission- aligned investors.

This platform had **40 community organizations** involved by the end of 2023.



# Policymakers: We facilitate community-backed problem-solving.

We build relationships with community leaders to connect policymakers with the people who intimately understand the issues they hope to tackle.

## New Americans Task Force

In partnership with the Utah Center for Immigration & Integration at the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity, this statewide task force consists of over **200+ members** works to identify barriers to New American integration in Utah.

Key accomplishments:

- Released the first set of [actionable recommendations](#).
- Launched the [Foreign Degree Credential survey](#), to understand the barriers to re-credentialing.
- Supported the passage of SB 35, legislation reducing barriers for foreign and out-of-state professionals seeking licenses.
- Hosted over **10 convenings** including a regional symposium in Cache County featuring national and local experts.

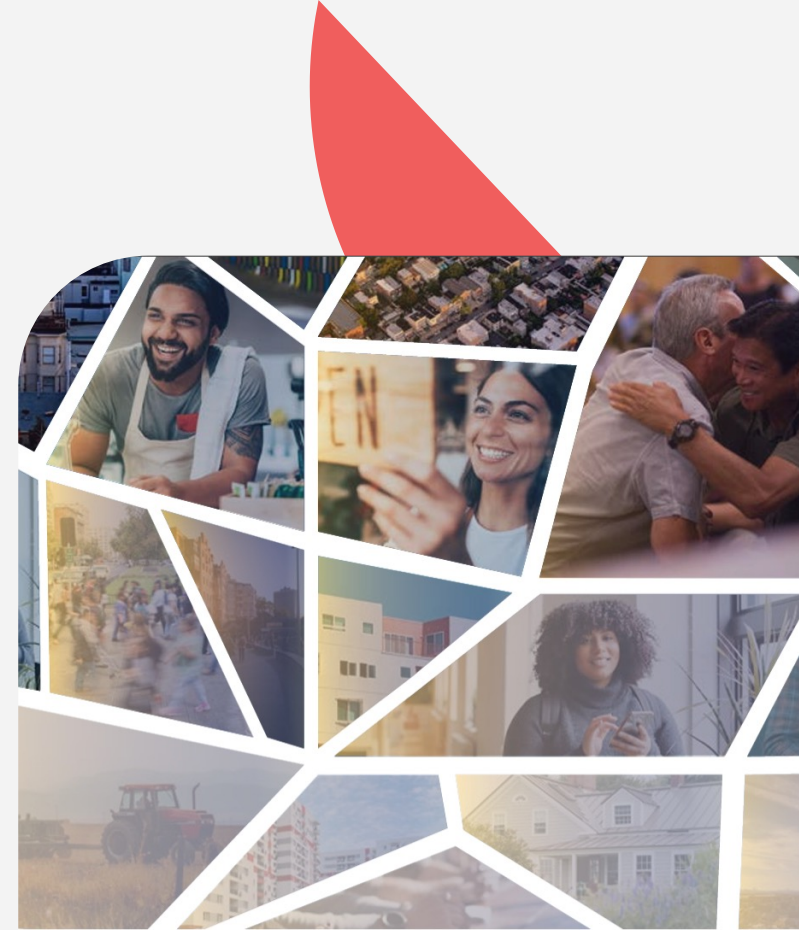


# Polymakers: Continued.

## Utah Thriving: Reducing Disparities through Legacy Strategies— Part One: Housing and Economy

The [Utah Thriving](#) is an ongoing series highlighting opportunities to increase pathways in Utah's economy, healthcare, education, and housing so all families have the opportunity to thrive. This first report features **ten actionable strategies** to increase opportunities in housing and economy for all.

“ *We have an opportunity to build a legacy of thriving for all and we are committed to working across aisles to see Utah's narrative of success reach the four corners of our state, leaving no one behind.* ”



**2023**

**UTAH THRIVING:**

Reducing Disparities Through Legacy Strategies  
Part One: Housing & Economy



# Businesses: We help businesses recruit and retain talent.

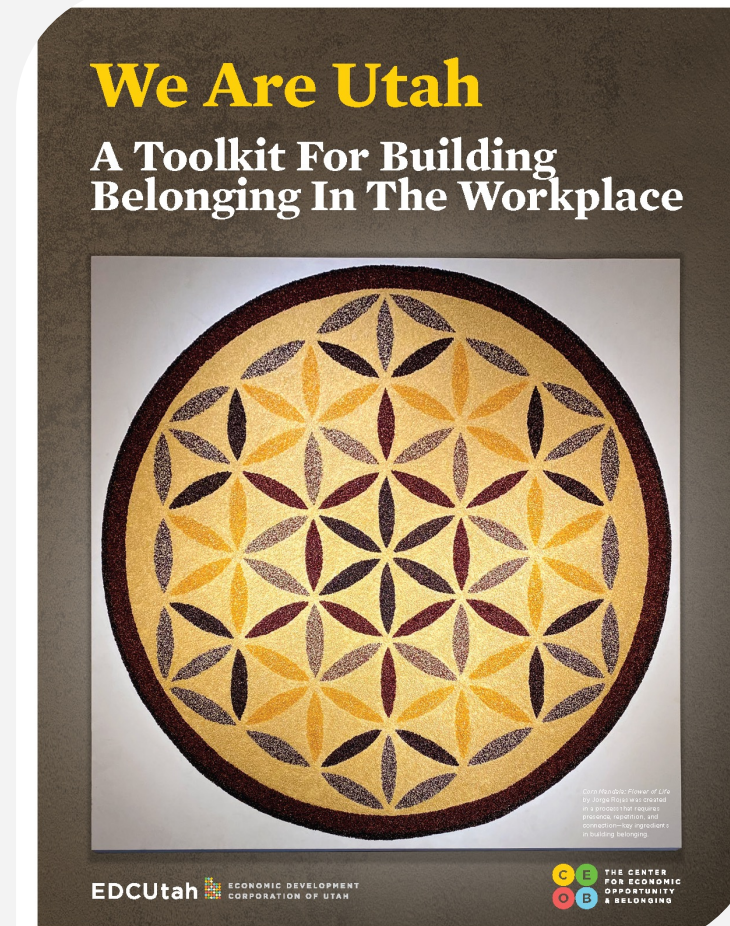
We provide resources and facilitate dialogue about how to foster belonging in the workplace so companies can better recruit and retain highly qualified talent and drive Utah's collective prosperity.

## We are Utah: A Toolkit to building Belonging in the Workplace & Building Belonging Through Storytelling Video

- Worked with the Economic Development Corporation of Utah to develop a [toolkit](#) of proven practices for employers to foster a culture of belonging. As of December 2023, the toolkit has **100+ downloads**.
- Worked closely with our partners at Comcast and EDCUtah to produce a [video](#) exploring the power of storytelling in building belonging.

“*We champion initiatives that improve employee experiences, increase harmony and boost productivity.*”

J.D. Keller  
Region Senior Vice President  
Comcast Mountain West Region



# Philanthropists: We foster trust-based collaboration.

We align our community ties with philanthropists' and desire to give, resulting in a deeper understanding of the issues they are committed to addressing.

## Trust-Based Convening Conversations

- Held over **three convenings** bringing community and philanthropy to the same table.
- Engaged with **30+ Utah philanthropists** to help them better understand community needs.





# Thank you!

Connect with us.



@belonginutah #belonginutah

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