Since its founding in 2015, RMAPI has made significant strides in addressing poverty across the Rochester community and we saw that momentum continue in new and encouraging ways over the last year.

RMAPI at its heart is a collective effort, a table where people and organizations come together to work collaboratively to bring systemic changes that will uplift all members of our community.

In the last year, we worked with partners to create a shared understanding of poverty in Rochester and Monroe County, supporting efforts that shined a light on the intentional policies and practices that created poverty. RMAPI's working groups set goals and objectives to address poverty at its root, encouraging wage enhancement by local employers and advocating for policies that decriminalize poverty. We continued to confirm and leverage community support with the expansion of our community cohorts.

We are encouraged by the response we have seen from our community. More than 110 employers have made a commitment to wage enhancement through our Level Up Champions initiative, building on the successful movement that RMAPI sparked in 2021 to encourage employers to move at least 10,000 positions to $15/hour or above. We surpassed our goal in 2021 and continued to add thousands more positions moving to or above $15/hour in the last year.

RMAPI's policy efforts have continued to expand, with a focus on raising wages to at least $15/hour as an important first step toward more livable wages, promoting equitable and inclusive decisions with regard to how COVID relief funding was spent, investing in families to create economic security across generations and decriminalizing poverty by changing the criminal legal system and focusing on reinvestment in communities.
Still, we recognize that creating systemic change takes time and continual effort, and we still face significant challenges. Many of the additional supports offered to families during the COVID-19 pandemic have ended, increasing the pressure on members of the community who were already vulnerable and struggling. A recent report from the New York State Comptroller’s Office found that poverty remains high in cities across the state, though there were some positive signs as well. The report noted that in Rochester, "the poverty rate for individuals had been more than 30 percent since 2010 before going down in 2019." It also found that "family poverty rates have improved over this time period in Albany, New York City and Rochester." In 2021, the poverty rate for individuals in Rochester was 27.8% while the rate for families was 21.8%.

But we also know that the poverty rate alone is not sufficient to measure the economic well-being of our community and the success of our efforts. RMAPI aims to go beyond improvements to the poverty rate, instead striving to break the cycle of poverty by shifting power to enable upward mobility for individuals and families.

Our commitment to the Rochester community remains steadfast. We will work collectively to come up with new and innovative solutions that advance upward mobility. RMAPI’s coalition members continue to make changes within their own organizations to better meet the needs of the community and align to our common goals. We are confident that we will continue to see the effects of systemic change across our community and a brighter future for all Rochester residents.
RMAPI’s work brings together stakeholders from across our community, with partners from the non-profit and private business sectors, state and local government representatives and community members all working together toward the goal of shifting power to enable upward mobility for individuals and families.

In 2022, RMAPI worked with 67 different organizations and hundreds of individual members. We participated in a number of coalitions meant to address the root causes of poverty and promote upward mobility. Members of the RMAPI collective took part in advocacy efforts both locally and in Albany to push for legislation that expands opportunities for upward mobility. And we continued to share opportunities for our community to better learn and understand the history of poverty in Rochester.

Our efforts will continue to expand in 2023 as we seek to actively grow our coalition and empower our community to make real and meaningful change.

Community Partnerships
RMAPI took part in the following coalitions in 2022

- City of Rochester, NY Housing Quality Task Force
- Reentry Association of WNY Smartnetwork
- ROC2025
- ROC Future
- Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council
- FUSE
- Center for Community Alternatives
Policy Achievements

In January 2022, RMAPI released a list of policy priorities for actions aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty. The RMAPI 2022 Policy Agenda focused on raising wages, promoting equitable and inclusive decisions, investing in families and decriminalizing poverty. Through ongoing advocacy, RMAPI was able to help advance a number of important policy changes.

Establishment of $15/hour starting wage at both the City of Rochester and Monroe County
Increase in tax credits for working families in New York State budget
State increases to reimbursement rates to promote wage enhancement

$22.1 Million

Funding distributed from Monroe County through the American Rescue Plan Act that directly responded to community-informed recommendations from RMAPI focused on housing, child care, mental health, transportation and reimagining re-entry.
RMAPI is a community-driven initiative where those who have lived and living experiences of poverty have voice and choice to equitably and actively participate in RMAPI collective-decision making so that everyone in our community has the opportunity for upward mobility.

The goal of the RMAPI collective is not just to engage local leaders and agencies but also context experts, community members with the lived and living experience of poverty. They are the people who experientially know about the issues RMAPI is working to solve.

We aim not just to inform and consult with community members, but also to empower them to make a meaningful difference. Community context experts are considered equals and treated as such by stakeholders at all final decision-making policy levels.

Our community engagement efforts expanded greatly in 2022, with the continued growth of our Community Advisory Council and community cohorts, as well as the expansion of efforts to reach and engage with community members through social media. Community cohort members have also led some exciting and important projects, from a Maternal Wellness Expo to work on a state task force aimed at reducing child poverty.

Community Spotlight

Candace Cabral, a member of RMAPI’s Single Female Head of Household Cohort, was selected to serve on New York State’s Child Poverty Advisory Council. The council has members from across the state with a goal to cut child poverty in half over the next decade.

"Just being able to show up as a context expert, someone with lived experience, to share my story and share my experience in navigating different support services, has been great. I love the work RMAPI does and I’m excited to be a member of this group."
Individuals engaged in RMAPI's community cohorts, which inform our work and empower our community

- **27**
- **53,195**
- **3**
- **22**

- Total impressions of RMAPI's community engagement and policy advocacy efforts across all social media platforms
- Number of RMAPI cohorts, including the Community Advisory Council, Single Female Head of Household Cohort and Frontline Worker Cohort
- iPads secured and given to community context experts to fully participate at RMAPI's tables

Community Spotlight

Danielle Jones, a member of RMAPI's Single Female Head of Household Cohort, organized a Maternal Wellness Expo in June to highlight organizations and resources designed to help mothers. Jones is a licensed mental health counselor and owner of Danielle Laurice Enterprises LLC and has been an active member of the RMAPI collective since its inception.

"We wanted to create a space where we are centering motherhood, where moms can learn about community resources and different businesses that have supports and services that can help them to take care of themselves in all areas of wellness."
In 2021, RMAPI set a bold goal for our community--to create a new movement that will bring 10,000 Rochester employees to $15/hour or greater.

Employers responded in a big way, with dozens moving to $15/hour and beyond for the first time. By the end of the year, more than 12,000 Rochester employees had moved to $15/hour or above, and RMAPI created the **Level Up Champions** initiative to acknowledge employers that had taken this step.

The number of Level Up Champions continued to grow throughout 2022 as organizations of all sizes joined the movement and took the first step toward wage equity. Level Up Champions recognize the dignity of all work and the important role that wage enhancement plays in promoting upward mobility for all Rochester residents.

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**Total number of Level Up Champions, a growth of more than 300% since the inaugural group was announced in September 2021.**

- **115**
- **48** Number of organizations that moved to $15/hour for the first time since RMAPI’s challenge in 2021.
- **12,000+** Total number of jobs moved to $15/hour or above by Level Up Champions since 2021.
- **100,000+** Total number of people collectively employed by Level Up Champions in the Greater Rochester Community.

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**A commitment to wage enhancement benefits the ENTIRE Rochester community.**

- For every extra $1 going into the pockets of high-wage workers, $0.39 is added back into the economy.
- For every extra $1 going into the pockets of low-wage workers, $1.21 is added back into the economy.

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**Who are Rochester's Level Up Champions?**

- **Private Sector Companies (17)**
- **Unions (3)**
- **Municipalities (4)**
- **Non-Profits (9)**
Good Job!

Level Up Champions

1199 SEIU
540WMain, Inc.
Action for a Better Community
Al Sigl Community of Agencies
Barilla Inc
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester
Bivona Child Advocacy Center
Builders Exchange of Rochester
Burgess & Miraqglia, P.C., Attorneys at Law
Catholic Charities Family and Community Services
Causewave Community Partners
Center for Dispute Settlement
Center for Youth
CGR
Champion Academy Extreme Mentoring and Empowerment Initiative
Charter Communications/Spectrum
Child Care Council
Children’s Institute
City of Rochester
City Newspaper
Coffee Connection
Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS)
Common Ground Health
Connected Communities
Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Rochester
Coordinated Care Services, Inc.
Council of Agency Executives
Delphi Drug & Alcohol Council, Inc.
DePaul
ESL Federal Credit Union
East High Educational Partnership Organization
East House
Empowering People’s Independence
ENALAS
Episcopal SeniorLife Communities
Excellus BlueCross BlueShield
Expressive Beginnings Child Care
FedEx Ground
Fee Brothers
Finger Lakes Community Health
Finger Lakes Performing Provider System
Five Star Bank
Flower City Habitat for Humanity
Foodlink
Foundry
Friendly Senior Living
Gleason Corp.
Goodwill of the Finger Lakes
Gorbel Inc.
Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
Greater Rochester Health Foundation
HCR Home Care
Heritage Christian Services
Highland Hospital
Hillside Family of Agencies
His Branches Inc.
Home Leasing
Huther-Doyle
Ibero-American Action League
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 4
Jewish Family Services
Jewish Senior Life
Lake Avenue Memorial Baptist Church
LiDestri
Lifespan
Lifetime Assistance Inc.
Mary Cariola
Max and Marian Farash Foundation
McAlpin Industries
Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe County
Monroe Community College
Monroe Community Hospital
Monroe County
National Susan B. Anthony Museum & House
Nazareth College
Northeastern Seminary
PEKO Precision Products Inc.
People, Inc
Planned Parenthood of Central and Western New York
Pre-Trial Services Corporation
Roberts Wesleyan College
ROC the Future
Rochester & Genesee Valley Area Labor Federation
Rochester Accessible Adventures
Rochester Area Community Foundation
Rochester Brainery
Rochester City School District
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester Regional Health
RochesterWorks!
RTS
School of the Holy Childhood
Skull Diamond and Heart Capital, LLC
St. Ann’s Community
St. John Fisher College
St. Joseph’s Neighborhood Center
Starbridge
The Aquinas Institute of Rochester
The Children’s Agenda
The Healing Connection
The Little
The Strong
Trillium Health
United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes
Universal Care Services LLC
University of Rochester
Urban League of Rochester
US Ceiling Corp
Velocitii, LLC
Villa of Hope
Volunteers of America
Willow Domestic Violence Center
Women’s Foundation of Genesee Valley
WXXI
YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County
RMAPI Steering Committee Member Organizations

1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East  
Member: Tracey Harrison

7th Judicial District, New York State  
Member: The Hon. Fatimat O. Reid

Action for a Better Community, Inc  
Member: Jerome Underwood

Center for Governmental Research  
Member: Erika Rosenberg

City of Rochester  
Members: Malik D. Evans, Dr. Shirley Green  
Liliana Ruiz

Common Ground Health  
Member: Wade Norwood

Community Representative  
Member: Dr. Cynthia Cole

Connected Communities  
Member: LaShunda Leslie-Smith

East High Educational Partnership Organization  
Member: Dr. Shaun Nelms

Empire State Development  
Member: Vinnie Esposito

ESL Federal Credit Union  
Member: Maureen Wolfe

ESL Foundation  
Member: Ajamu Kitwana

Finger Lakes Performing Provider System  
Member: Carol Tegas

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes  
Member: Jennifer Lake

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce  
Member: Robert J. Duffy

Greater Rochester Health Foundation  
Member: Matt Kuhlenbeck

Harry Bronson, Assembly District 138

Ibero American Action League  
Member: Angelica Perez-Delgado

Joseph Morelle, Congressman, NY 25th District

Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation  
Member: Jennie Schaff

Monroe Community College  
Member: Calvin Gantt

Monroe County  
Members: Adam Bello, Corinda Crossdale

Retired Representative  
Member: Daan Braveman

ROC the Future Alliance  
Member: Brian Lewis

Rochester Area College Presidents  
Member: Dr. Angela D. Sims

Rochester Area Community Foundation  
Member: Simeon Banister

Rochester Area Educational Opportunity Center (REOC)  
Member: Roosevelt Mareus

Rochester Housing Authority  
Member: Shawn Burr

Rochester Regional Health System  
Member: Katie Sienk

RochesterWorks, Inc.  
Member: Dave Seeley

Regional Transit Service (RTS)  
Member: Miguel Velazquez

The Children's Agenda  
Member: Larry Marx

TogetherNow  
Member: Laura Gustin

United Way of Greater Rochester and the  
Finger Lakes  
Member: Jaime Saunders

University of Rochester  
Member: Peter G. Robinson

Urban League of Rochester  
Member: Dr. Seanelle Hawkins

US Ceiling Corp  
Member: Melissa James-Geska

YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County  
Member: Dr. Myra Henry