



**For Immediate Release**

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**FRANKLIN COUNTY RISE TOGETHER INNOVATION CENTER APPOINTS  
DANIELLE SYDNOR AS CEO  
Sydnor to Drive Recommendations of Rise Together Blueprint to Reduce Poverty**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – After a national search, the Franklin County Rise Together Innovation Center board of directors today announces the appointment of Danielle Sydnor as Chief Executive Officer of the Rise Together Innovation Center (RTIC). Sydnor becomes the inaugural leader of the center, established as a result of recommendations from the Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County.

Sydnor is Founder and CEO of We Win Strategies Group, a company focused on advancement, access, and upward mobility for disadvantaged populations through economic development, racial equity and inclusion and entrepreneurship opportunities. Recent accomplishments of the company include:

- Spearheading and designing Cuyahoga County’s COVID-19 Stabilization Loan and Grant Fund for small businessowners; resulting in \$8.7 million in grants disbursed with 55% of the businesses self-identified as racial minorities;
- Establishing Cuyahoga Countywide Small Business Resource Call Center within five days to assess, navigate, and refer small businesses to an ecosystem of 13 local business support providers; and
- Leading ecosystem meetings driving collaboration across 13 partner organizations to provide efficient COVID-19 related support to small business owners.

Prior to founding her company, Sydnor was Northern Ohio executive director of the Economic and Community Development Institute (ECDI) where she managed an annual budget of \$2.6 million and had strategic oversight of ECDI Northern Ohio operations, which included Cleveland, Akron, Canton and Toledo offices, supervising 11 direct reports. She has also held leadership positions at Merrill Lynch, Bank of America and PNC Bank.

“I am ready to begin the important work of the center,” said Sydnor. “I see this as a real opportunity to disrupt institutional racism to drive sustainable change and address the tough challenges of reducing poverty in Central Ohio,” she continued. “The bottom-up work this community has done to develop recommendations that will help eradicate poverty over time is big, heavy work. I am excited to begin connecting with partners and start this important commitment on behalf of Franklin County.”

Sydnor holds a B.S. degree from the University of Phoenix and professional certification from the Yale School of Management. Among her many volunteer activities, she currently serves as president of the NAACP, Cleveland Branch.

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Born out of the 2019 Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County, the RTIC is tasked with advocating and driving policy to support the ongoing work of the blueprint, including the short- and long-term action steps from the steering committee. The RTIC has a 17-member board of directors led by board chair Trudy Bartley, associate vice president for Community Relations at The Ohio State University, and board vice chair Matt Habash, president and chief executive officer of the Mid-Ohio Food Collective.

“Danielle has demonstrated experience in driving significant, bold, innovative efforts to help address equity gaps in communities,” said Trudy Bartley. “As we work to meet the goals of eradicating poverty in our community, Danielle is forward thinking, she is a collaborator and has proven she knows how to bring communities together to garner change to lift up all people.”

With the goals of improving economic mobility, family stability, and equitable access to opportunity across Central Ohio, the blueprint outlines a series of recommendations that will drive Sydnor’s work.

“The RITC is about us looking outside of the box and looking at new ways to collaborate by multiple sectors digging deep into breaking down old systems of doing business and being intentional about creating new systems to reduce poverty,” said Matt Habash. “It’s about us coming together, looking at root causes and being courageous enough to do our work differently – Danielle will drive this work for the center,” he added.

Sydnor will assume the role of CEO for the center on September 13, 2021. Her offices are located in the Smart Columbus Experience Center, 170 S Civic Center Dr, Columbus, OH 43215.

### **About RTIC**

The Rise Together Innovation Center is funded by Franklin County Board of Commissioners. The center is formed as a direct result of the findings and recommendations from [Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County](#). The center, its own nonprofit entity, is an incubator of new ideas and will address issues around poverty that often times lead to punitive action against those who receive benefits. The RTIC will lead advocacy for and engage local, state and federal policy makers to address practices and policies that impact poverty. The center will collaborate with agencies and organizations to support their work in driving and executing the recommendations of Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County. RTIC will also generate ideas and act as a convener of resources, funding, programming and access to drive solutions for countering poverty in Franklin County.

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