



Nicole Sherard-Freeman became the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan’s first Chief Operating Officer in July 2023. In this new role, Sherard-Freeman oversees the Foundation’s donor services, finance, grantmaking services, information technology, program, special initiatives, and the New Economy Initiative (NEI) teams.

Sherard-Freeman was most recently Group Executive of Jobs, Economy & Detroit at Work, and Executive Director of the Mayor’s Workforce Development Board for Mayor Mike Duggan, City of Detroit.

In 2021, Mayor Duggan combined the city’s economic development functions and workforce development functions under Sherard-Freeman’s leadership. Under this unified structure, she and her teams led the strategies to attract and retain businesses in the city, and the strategy to provide a ready workforce for employers in Detroit. Enabled by funding from both the American Rescue Plan Act and the US Department of Labor, Detroiters began to experience the benefits of a combined economic development and workforce development structure. ARPA funded programs including Skills for Life, Learn to Earn, and Grow Detroit’s Young Talent are among the programs on track to provide opportunities for thousands in the City.

Sherard-Freeman’s integration of economic development and workforce development led to more than doubling the number of employers who give hiring priority to Detroiters in their Detroit facilities. While large-scale deals like Stellantis (formerly FCA), Michigan Central Ford Train Station, GM, major automotive suppliers, and Amazon are key to the city’s growth,

Sherard-Freeman is also charged with expanding small and mid-size business growth in commercial corridors and neighborhoods. Under her leadership, economic development and workforce development produce industrial land readiness and large-scale employment, and small and mid-size business strategies that help enable thriving communities and grow Detroit's middle class.

Sherard-Freeman is on the board of WorkRise: An Urban Institute Initiative and is a Special Advisor and Guest Lecturer for the University of Michigan – Ford School of Public Policy's Poverty Solutions initiative.

She has served as an expert witness for the US House Education and Labor Committee, and recently testified before the US Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) Committee. Sherard-Freeman is a guest lecturer at the University of Michigan on workforce and talent pipeline development and is a frequent contributor to local news outlets and publications.

Born and raised in Detroit, she is a proud graduate of the Detroit Public School System. Sherard-Freeman holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and has completed graduate studies in Organizational Management and Development at Fielding Graduate University. She is a Crain's Notable Women in Non-Profits alumni, a 2018 Michigan Chronicle Woman of Excellence, a member of the 2021 class of Crain's Most Influential Women in Michigan and is an Axios Detroit 2022 Power Player. She was a lead researcher and co-author of *Detroit's Untapped Talent: Partnerships and Pathways to Success*, and *Detroit's Untapped Talent: Jobs and On-ramps Needed*, companion research briefs often cited by local workforce experts.

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