

For Immediate Release For more information, contact:

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***Keiah L. Shauku Named Open4 Program Director***

Buffalo, N.Y. – The UB Regional Institute (UBRI) has hired Keiah L. Shauku to serve as the Program Director for Open4, a partnership of community-based organizations and funders who work to connect entrepreneurs and small businesses with the resources, support, and guidance they need to thrive.

 Shauku brings with her a decade of experience in community outreach, diverse community engagement, partnership cultivation, program development and assessment, and organizational leadership. She most recently served as Director of Outreach and Community Relations at Urban Avenues, a not-for-profit collective located in Birmingham, Alabama and prior to that as an Educational Program Developer in Jefferson County, Alabama.

 Reporting to the UBRI Director, Shauku will work closely with the Open4 Program Management team which operates the Open4 program on behalf of the Open4 funders. Shauku will act as the primary day-to-day contact for funders, partners, Program Management team members, Open4-supported national consultants, and all other stakeholders. Her responsibilities include managing relationships with current and potential Open4 grantees including supporting the proposal development process; regularly engaging with grantees to monitor progress against milestones; and managing contingencies. She will also work to regularly convene funders, grantees, and other stakeholders to facilitate collaboration and report on progress; and manage multiple external consultants including subject matter experts and independent evaluators. Shauku will advance the long-term and broader agenda of Open4; and serve as the on-the-ground voice of Open4 with community members and external stakeholders.

 Shauku earned a B.A. in International Studies with a minor in Communications and Computer Science from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and served as a Korean Crypto Linguist in the U.S. Army. She is fluent in Korean and proficient in Spanish. Her awards include the Army Good Conduct Medal, 2017 Vulcan Servant Leader Award, 2018 TechBirmingham Game Changer Award and she was a City of Birmingham 2019 StrongHer Honoree. Shauku now resides in her hometown of Buffalo, NY.

**About UBRI**

[The UB Regional Institute (UBRI)](http://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/) is a local and national award-winning research center working with the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, supporting stronger regional economies for all. UBRI has been working in the region with the School for over 30 years, pursuing public scholarship with community constituencies at the intersection of public policy, urban planning, urban design, architecture, and real estate development.

**About Open4**

Open4 is a partnership of community-based organizations and funders who work together to connect small businesses with the resources, support and guidance they need to thrive. Its goal is to accelerate the launch, growth, and sustainability of small businesses in the greater Buffalo and Rochester region.

 The Open4 Fund was created at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo by a group of foundations and corporations to help entrepreneurs and small business owners in the Western New York and Rochester regions, with a specific focus on businesses owned by women and people of color in underserved, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

 The John R. Oishei Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, M&T Bank, KeyBank, Pegula Sports + Entertainment, the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation and ESL are funders of the effort.

 Open4 takes a strategic approach to strengthen the small business ecosystem and build a resilient small business community that promotes inclusive economic growth. It invests in, supports, and enhances small business support organizations who specifically cater to underserved communities. Find out more at [www.Open4wny.org](http://www.open4wny.org/).

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