



SCAN TO READ
THE FULL POLICY
ROAD MAP



No Dead Ends

A Policy Agenda for Ensuring Boundless Opportunities at School, at Work, and in Life



Our nation's approach to learning and work is not keeping pace with ongoing changes in the circumstances of people's lives or evolving labor market conditions.

People deserve a different approach—one that produces *no dead ends at school, at work, and in life.*

Imagine a learn-and-work system with:

- **No limits** on the aspirations of learners and workers.
- **No artificial endpoints** on career pathways.
- **No ceilings** on career advancement.
- **No impossible choices** between pursuing one's career and taking care of family responsibilities.
- **No harmful risks** when changing directions in one's learning and work journey.

At Jobs for the Future (JFF), we believe U.S. education and workforce systems and policies must be reengineered to provide boundless opportunities for economic advancement.

If policymakers take on this challenge and eliminate dead ends, the country will make progress toward the ambitious goal we have embraced as our North Star: By 2033, 75 million people facing systemic barriers to advancement will work in quality jobs.



Four Policy Priorities for No Dead Ends

JFF is offering common-sense, field-tested policy solutions that state and federal lawmakers can enact today to begin reengineering education and workforce systems so that high-quality employment and education opportunities are **accessible, discoverable, and achievable** for all.

Read on for our recommendations of steps policymakers can take to achieve four broad goals on their way to building systems with no dead ends.



1. Empower people with data, guidance, and resources that enable them to navigate their work and learning journeys and flourish throughout their lives.

- **Set statewide goals for doubling the number of learners and workers in quality jobs:**
 - » Set standards for what represents a quality job.
 - » Measure progress toward numerical goals.
 - » Establish key incentives and enforcement mechanisms for strengthening working conditions and addressing disparities in access to quality jobs.
 - » Use the bully pulpit to make the public aware of employers who commit to quality job standards.
- **Strengthen the efficacy of publicly funded programs in education, training, and work-based learning:**
 - » Establish a consistent set of quality standards.
 - » Invest in data infrastructure for tracking learning outcomes and job performance.
 - » Fund institutions based on their ability to improve outcomes and close gaps.
- **Establish a comprehensive career navigation system:**
 - » Invest in career coaches and in online tools to provide timely and accurate information about in-demand jobs and skills and offer personalized guidance.
 - » Invest in systems and intermediary organizations that support learning and working transitions.
- **Provide flexible, portable funding for skills acquisition and lifelong learning:**
 - » Make high-quality short-term credential programs eligible for postsecondary financial aid.
 - » Increase funding for training accounts deployed through the public workforce development system.



2. Recognize everyone's skills, knowledge, and expertise, regardless of when and where their learning and development experiences occur.

- **Make awarding credit for prior learning and work experiences a common and consistent practice in education and workforce systems:**
 - » Invest in tools and technical assistance that build a shared language around competencies and create a common assessment repository to improve skills transparency and portability.
 - » Encourage wider adoption by permitting the use of financial aid to pay for prior learning assessments and by providing incentives to institutions for awarding credit for prior learning.
- **Build conditions for skills-based hiring by bolstering the adoption of digital learning and employment records (LER) as an alternative to traditional resumes:**
 - » Promote expanded use of LERs by encouraging stakeholders to work together to support pilot programs and offer incentives for adoption.
 - » Establish data standards and support the development of an interoperable tech infrastructure to safeguard LER data and ensure the integrity, privacy, and portability of LER records.



3. Blur the lines between learning and work systems to foster common purpose among educators and employers and smooth pathways to economic advancement.

- **Ensure that all “college in high school” course offerings align with college and career pathways:**
 - » Provide funding and guidance to institutions to design and offer transferrable dual enrollment courses that combine academic subjects with career and technical education courses that enable early exposure to and preparation for careers in fields that offer good pay and opportunities for advancement.
 - » Ensure that public funding is available to cover the cost of tuition and fees for college and career pathway dual enrollment courses.
 - » Boost funding for education and career advising to help students and families make informed choices.
- **Mobilize employers to expand access to meaningful, paid work-based learning experiences:**
 - » Ease the burdens on employers that offer work-based learning experiences by investing in regional sector strategies and supporting intermediary organizations.
 - » Create incentives for employers, schools, and workforce agencies to provide work-based learning experiences and to ensure that individuals can afford to participate in these programs.
 - » Improve the consistency of work-based learning experiences by setting quality standards for common work-based learning models.



4. Help people get ahead during times of economic uncertainty and personal adversity.

- **Use outcomes-based financing solutions to promote a better and more learner-friendly market for education and training:**
 - » Establish clear and strong regulatory guardrails for income share agreements, outcome-based loans, and other forms of income-contingent financing to ensure that providers don't take advantage of students.
- **Make family assistance programs work for learners and workers—especially for people on the front lines of caregiving:**
 - » Ease access to publicly funded employment, training, and human service supports by establishing common sets of intake processes, standards for determining eligibility, and performance metrics.
 - » Invest in benefits navigators in community settings to screen learners and workers for public benefits eligibility.
 - » Ensure that people aren't at risk of abruptly losing their public benefits when their wages increase.
 - » Develop new income tax credits to increase the take-home pay of workers in care economy jobs.
- **Enable fair chances at economic advancement for people with records of arrests, convictions, or incarceration by increasing their access to postsecondary education and training:**
 - » Encourage and enable more people to enroll in education and training while incarcerated by overturning restrictive policies and rewarding participants with benefits and privileges.
 - » Invest in technology and academic and career services tailored to the needs of individuals who are incarcerated.
 - » Establish participation in education and training as a core activity during parole or probation.
 - » Prohibit colleges and universities from considering conviction histories in admissions and program eligibility policies.
 - » Adjust financial aid rules for satisfactory academic progress to account for the many learners who face academic disruptions beyond their control.

Learn More About JFF's No Dead Ends Priorities

JFF has a detailed road map describing our No Dead Ends vision and the urgency for taking action across each of the four policy priorities discussed in this agenda.



To learn more and to partner with JFF to move policy forward, visit [JFF.org](https://www.jff.org), [contact us](#), or email the JFF [Policy & Advocacy](#) team directly at policy@jff.org.