



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Project ACCESS: Accelerating Career Connections and Employment Success Strategies

Introduction

Jobs for the Future (JFF), with support from the PwC Foundation, is creating and supporting a cohort of 10 exemplary community and technical colleges in accelerating innovative programs that effectively connect learners—especially those facing systemic barriers, such as learners who identify as Black or Latine, women of all backgrounds, learners from low-income households, and first-generation postsecondary education students—with paid work-based learning opportunities and [quality jobs](#). Through direct funding from the PwC Foundation and JFF’s technical assistance, JFF and the cohort institutions will help identify, strengthen, and scale existing programs aligned with a variety of strategies, including apprenticeship and work-based learning, career navigation services and supports, short-term credentials, and other approaches that can lead to labor market opportunity.

About JFF

JFF drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. We do this by designing solutions, scaling best practices, influencing policy and action, and investing in innovation. We forge deep partnerships with employers, investors, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and education and workforce development providers to break down barriers and reimagine what’s possible. JFF’s work is guided by a central goal, our North Star: By 2033, 75 million people facing systemic barriers to advancement will work in quality jobs.

JFF’s [Center for Racial Economic Equity](#) works to accelerate economic advancement for Black learners and workers and other populations who face systemic barriers associated with race in our education and workforce systems. We identify and scale strategies to disrupt occupational segregation and eradicate racial wealth gaps through research, thought leadership, network building, and advisory services.

About PwC Foundation

The [PwC Foundation](#) supports the academic and career success of historically underrecognized students. Through strategic investments in solutions that scale career readiness at postsecondary institutions, the PwC Foundation is helping empower students to overcome challenges, persist through their studies, and pursue choice-filled lives.

To help address the opportunity and employment gap, the PwC U.S. firm committed \$125 million to support a more equitable future for 25,000 Black and Latino/Hispanic college students to prepare for and begin their careers. Focusing on students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and community colleges, PwC is providing access to high-demand digital and career readiness training and upskilling, mentorship, and pathways toward the start of their careers.

RFP Timeline	
November 14, 2024	RFP released
November 20, 2024	Information session #1
December 10, 2024	Information session #2
January 8, 2025	Information session #3
January 17, 2025	College proposals due
Early March 2025	Notice of intent to award

Award Timeline	
April 2025	Project begins
June 30, 2027	Project ends

Overview of Opportunity

Community and technical colleges play a critical role in disrupting occupational segregation and driving economic advancement for learners facing barriers, including Black and Latine learners, women of all backgrounds, learners from low-income households, and first-generation postsecondary education students. The odds of underemployment for graduates who have at least one internship are [48.5% lower than those who have no internships](#), yet students from the groups above are [less likely to experience paid internships](#) and other [work-based learning opportunities](#). The removal of systemic barriers to economic advancement is vital for the sustainable growth and development of the community college-to-career pipeline. However, in the postsecondary landscape, community and technical colleges [often face inequities and hurdles](#) when designing and implementing equitable work-based learning (WBL) opportunities and other strategies to diversify pathways to high-wage, high-growth jobs.

JFF and the PwC Foundation are collaborating to identify and support a cohort of 10 exemplary public community and technical colleges. These colleges will help accelerate innovative programs that have demonstrated success in connecting learners to paid work-based learning opportunities and [quality jobs](#), particularly for learners who face systemic barriers in our education and workforce systems. Through direct funding from the PwC Foundation and technical assistance from JFF, JFF will identify, strengthen, and help scale existing programs aligned with a variety of strategies, including apprenticeship and work-based learning, career navigation services and supports, short-term credentials, and other approaches that can lead to labor market opportunity.

Colleges that are selected for this opportunity will be provided with \$300,000 over a two-year period. Colleges will be expected to utilize these funds to strengthen, expand, and scale effective programming that connects community and technical college learners facing systemic barriers to economic advancement to paid work-based learning experiences and/or quality jobs. Participating colleges will be expected to use these resources to expand the reach of their program(s) and enable success of participants in those programs.

Key Terms

- For the purposes of this initiative, JFF defines “program” as any pre-existing, established program or practice that connects learners to paid work-based learning opportunities and/or jobs that meet one or more components of quality jobs. Examples include apprenticeship and work-based learning, career navigation services and supports, short-term credentials, and other strategies.
- JFF defines a [quality job](#) as one that includes the following components:
 - **Compensation**, including living wage, comprehensive benefits, paid leave, and pay equity and transparency
 - **Advancement opportunities**, including skills-based practices, transparent career pathways, career coaching and training, and inclusive internal advancement
 - **Agency and culture**, including belonging and psychological safety, transparent HR functions, ability to organize, opportunities for input, and meaningful commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
 - **Structure**, including safe, healthy, and accessible workplaces, fair scheduling, proper classification, and job security
- JFF defines [work-based learning](#) as an approach to training in which a student or worker completes meaningful job tasks in a workplace, leading to the development of critical

knowledge and skills that support entry or advancement in a particular career field. Work-based learning also includes practitioners' use of explorative activities to strengthen career engagement and experience. Work-based learning supports a continuum of lifelong learning and skill development.

Award Benefits (April 2025 – June 2027)

- **\$300,000 sub-award** to strengthen, expand, and scale effective institutional programs over a two-year period (awarded in two installments in spring 2025 and spring 2026). Utilization of funds toward this goal will be determined by the participating college. For example, funds might be applied to support existing staff person(s) as they participate in the technical assistance and community of practice, hire additional staff, strengthen partnerships, strengthen and expand robust data systems, including assistance fielding student surveys and focus groups, support activities that build social capital, and/or improve wraparound supports.
- **Ongoing coaching and technical assistance (TA)** provided by JFF subject matter experts, including support for increasing stakeholder engagement; co-designing interventions, implementation plans, and sustainability plans; and bringing applicable knowledge from across JFF's Center for Racial Economic Equity and Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning, including evidence-based practices and frameworks. This TA includes support from JFF's research team, who will provide research and assessment services and tools to understand impact and sensemaking around metrics to inform action steps.
- **Engagement in a community of practice (CoP)** with community college peers across the country, including the participation of two representatives from each college in bi-annual convenings (one virtual and one in-person) to share learnings, strengthen connections, and amplify effective practices.
- **Thought leadership** shared with the postsecondary and workforce fields promoted on JFF's national platforms and amplified through convenings and other engagement of JFF's networks.
- **Opportunity for field leadership and impact** in critical areas of education and workforce transformation.

Expectations of Participating Colleges

- **Commitment to inclusive opportunity and equity** in program participation, completion, and employment outcomes.

- **Commitment to outcomes and impact:**

- Selected colleges will aim to increase the number of participating learners by at least 30% annually during the life of the project.
- Selected colleges will aim to close participation gaps for those facing systemic barriers, such as learners who identify as Black or Latine, women of all backgrounds, learners from low-income households, and first-generation postsecondary education students.
- Selected colleges will track and measure participants' demonstrated measurable skill gains, including, but not limited to, gains in specific technical skills based on program content areas (e.g., gains in tech support skills and knowledge for an IT program) and more general career skills like self-advocacy, confidence, and development of social capital—to be determined in collaboration with JFF.
- Selected colleges will aim to implement strategies that can help connect participants to paid work-based learning (WBL), such as paid internships, and/or jobs that meet one or more components of quality jobs.

- **Commitment to partnerships:**

- Selected colleges will build connections with employers and other community organizations that can provide students access to work-based learning opportunities, mentors, or other essential opportunities necessary for the success of the program. This may include tracking and reporting the number of outreaches to new employers or community organizations and the number of students connected to employers and organizations.

- **Commitment to research and evaluation:**

- Selected colleges will track applicants and students in their programs. This will include following up with students post-completion to assess employment or WBL outcomes and identifying and re-engaging learners who have stopped out to identify barriers to completion. JFF recommends that participating colleges include funding for incentives to provide outcomes data. JFF will collaborate with institutions to support and develop their capacity toward this commitment as needed.
- Selected colleges will commit to a data sharing agreement with JFF that will outline the expected data, evaluation, and reporting expectations. None of these expectations will supersede standard personal identifiable information and data privacy expectations. This will include at minimum but not be limited to:
 - o Reporting data bi-annually.
 - o Recruiting, distributing, collecting, and reporting data from student surveys to assess

student engagement, satisfaction with program, and program employment outcomes.

o Aiding JFF in recruiting students and employers for qualitative interviews as needed.

- **Commitment to participate in TA and coaching:**

- Selected colleges will participate in ongoing TA and coaching during the grant period which will include support for the co-design of implementation, improvement, and sustainability plans. JFF anticipates that a program director or dean responsible for this project attend all coaching meetings. For select meetings (e.g., kickoff, external events), attendance from college leadership (e.g., at the VP level) may be required.

- Selected colleges will participate in regular virtual sessions as part of the community of practice, two convenings of community colleges leaders and practitioners annually each year of the project (one virtual and one in-person with resources provided by JFF to cover travel for up to two leaders per college), and individualized coaching to support planning and implementation.

- **Note:** Disbursement of second and final sub-award will be contingent on fulfillment of commitments above.

Award Eligibility requirements

- Participating colleges are a public community or technical college, which may include community colleges offering baccalaureate programs.
- Participating colleges have a pre-existing program with strong evidence of the effectiveness of connecting learners to paid work-based learning opportunities and/or jobs that meet one or more components of quality jobs.
- Participating colleges have at least 100-150 students already enrolled in this program annually (this may include across multiple campuses).
- Participating colleges demonstrate that their program serves or aims to serve a representative group of students, including learners facing systemic barriers, such as learners who identify as Black and Latine, women of all backgrounds, learners from low-income households, and first-generation postsecondary education students.
- Participating programs have the capacity or willingness to build capacity for robust data collection and programmatic evaluation.

Submission Instructions

1. Download and fill out a copy of the [Project ACCESS College Proposal Template](#).
2. Prepare additional attachments: Two letters of support:
 - a. A letter of support from your college president
 - b. A letter of support from a critical partner, which could include an employer
3. When ready, submit the materials as attachments **by January 17, 2025**, to projectaccess@jff.org.
4. See [Project ACCESS College Proposal Template](#) for additional details.



Building a Future
That Works
For Everyone