



ACT for ALEXANDRIA
A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Building Pathways to Better Futures:

Understanding Alexandria's Youth Employment Ecosystem



Mapping Alexandria's Youth Employment Landscape

The **Alexandria Youth Employment & Career Technical Education (CTE) Working Group** began convening in 2024, bringing together more than 50 leaders from city government, Alexandria City Public Schools, local non-profits, funders, higher education institutions, and local and regional employers.

The goal was to better understand the support systems available to youth seeking fulfilling careers, meaningful employment opportunities, and brighter futures.

While quality career and technical education, work-based learning, and employment opportunities can help students plan for future success, **too many Alexandria youth don't know what programs exist, struggle to access them, or lack the support they need to succeed.** Many face real obstacles—transportation and language barriers—that keep them from life-changing opportunities.

Alexandria Youth Employment & CTE Working Group Objectives:

- 1 Enhance youth career readiness opportunities and outcomes
- 2 Streamline resources by promoting cross-sector collaboration
- 3 Address systemic barriers to create equitable opportunities for marginalized youth
- 4 Develop a youth employment pipeline aligned with regional workforce needs



A Community Wide Conversation

190+	96	91	25	10	100+
STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED	STUDENTS ENGAGED	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED	FOCUS GROUPS HELD	PROGRAMS EVALUATED

In the summer of 2025, the Working Group, with the support of Flown Consulting, began a comprehensive listening and learning process, engaging nearly 200 stakeholders to understand what’s working, what’s missing, and what youth and families need to build strong futures.

This landscape analysis resulted in a map of Alexandria’s youth employment ecosystem, program directory, and clear recommendations for moving forward together.

In the fall of 2025, the Working Group engaged nearly 200 stakeholders in interviews, focus groups, and surveys to assess Alexandria’s youth employment landscape. Over 100 youth programs were evaluated. More than 50 met the criteria and are featured on a map of the city’s current ecosystem—including both active programs and those in discussion or planning phases.

Programs were evaluated on:

Career readiness focus:

Does the program support workforce development and career opportunities?

Learning curriculum level:

Does it align within the career exploration, career preparedness, or career launch spectrum?

Age appropriateness:

Does it serve youth from middle school through age 24?

Alexandria presence:

Is the program actively serving youth in our community?

ACT for Alexandria’s Unique Role

For more than 20 years, ACT for Alexandria has served as a convener and catalyst for cross-sector collaboration. ACT’s ability to unite diverse voices around a shared vision has created lasting change on critical community issues and youth employment is no exception.

What makes Alexandria’s approach to youth employment unique is this unprecedented partnership between schools, city government, employers, nonprofit partners, funders, and most importantly, youth and families directly impacted. ACT’s goal is to ensure everyone has a seat at the table and a voice in shaping solutions.

Together, we’re not just talking about change, we’re creating it together.

What We Heard: Voices From Our Community

The Working Group listened to each stakeholder group to understand their unique perspectives, challenges, and needs.



Students

- Face transportation barriers and competing priorities
- Some are unaware of current programs and career pathways available
- Majority are interested in pursuing a four-year degree after high school

Being in high school and being so busy—**flexibility is a big thing**. That's why I don't have a job. Most weekdays I'm in club leadership.

- ACPS Student

City Staff

- Cite limited capacity and funding as barriers to expanding opportunities
- Would like to build more employer relationships and see more opportunities
- Want to be more strategic about connecting youth to employers

Alexandria is a giving city and [people] want to do great work, [we need] a **way to get employers to hire young people**.

- City of Alexandria Staff Member

The common thread:

Everyone wants to collaborate, but capacity, funding, and coordination are limiting what's possible.

Families

- Many parents are unaware of current programs
- Cite lack of eligibility as a concern
- Want to see more internships and summer employment opportunities

“ My own experience—**accessibility is all over the place**. A forum or space for all of us [would be ideal]. A lot of people are brainstorming about those opportunities.

– Family member of ACPS student ”

Schools (ACPS)

- Managing competing state mandates
- Career Academies are new, still building identity
- Highlighted the rich diversity of student population, languages and cultures

“ We have to honor the fact that we have different marching orders and stakeholders—**the ultimate stakeholder we are trying to help are those young people**.

– ACPS staff member ”

Nonprofit Partners

- See students facing multiple barriers, including systemic ones
- Note language, documentation, and housing challenges
- Want to collaborate but need better coordination across partners

“ Scarcity is a mindset when we are competing but maybe we can **partner and get more work done** with deeper partnerships.

– Nonprofit Partner ”

Employers

- Want to build workforce pipelines and prepare for future hiring needs
- Find it difficult to connect with ACPS due to capacity concerns
- Would like students to strengthen soft skills before entering the workplace

“ Our company has great people, real opportunities and a **strong commitment to diversity**. We want young people in Alexandria to know this can be a starting point.

– Employer Partner ”

Where We Are: The Current Ecosystem

With support from Flown Consulting, a landscape analysis mapped 50+ programs into three categories: career exploration, preparedness, and launch.

The analysis revealed a robust but fragmented youth employment ecosystem that is heavily skewed toward exploration, with significant gaps in paid work experiences and career launch programs leading to certifications and living-wage jobs.

A critical question remains:

How do we work together to strengthen and expand programs to serve Alexandria's youth, families, and employers?

The Landscape Today

(as of December 2025)

Career Exploration: 25 Programs (47%)

Brief opportunities to learn about professions, fields, companies, and post-secondary interests.

- Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS)
- Alexandria A Cappella Collective
- Alexandria Seaport Foundation
- Alexandria Soccer Association
- Alexandria Youth Ambassadors
- Building Momentum
- Campagna Center
- Capital Youth Empowerment Program
- Community Lodgings
- Cornerstone Craftsman
- ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia
- Genesys Works
- George Mason University
- Good Shepherd Housing Inova
- Kaiser Permanente
- Liberty's Promise
- Northern Virginia Family Service
- NoVA RAFT
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- The Chamber ALX
- Virginia Tech
- Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association
- Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

Alexandria's Youth Employment Ecosystem Map

Career Preparedness: 19 Programs (35%)

Short-term paid work experience to build employability skills.

- 4 Mr
- Alexandria City Public Schools
- AlexRenew
- Alexandria Soccer Association
- American Red Cross
- Casa Chirilagua
- City of Alexandria
- Computer Core
- Cornerstone Craftsman
- Genesys Works
- Inova
- Kaiser Permanente
- Liberty's Promise
- Northern Virginia Family Service
- NoVA RAFT
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- The Learning Quest
- Virginia Tech
- Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

Career Launch: 9 Programs (16%)

Apprenticeships and longer internships that hire young people to work while getting on the job training and certifications.

- Alexandria City Public Schools
- Alexandria Soccer Association
- AlexRenew
- City of Alexandria
- Cornerstone Craftsman
- Hopkins House
- IBEW Local 26
- Inova
- Urban Alliance

The Youth Employment Ecosystem Map is an evolving document that will need to be maintained and updated regularly. This version reflects the landscape as of December 2025. Note: the career readiness spectrum is from the CityWorks DC Work-Based Learning Framework.

Where We're Going: Next Steps



The Alexandria Youth Employment and CTE Working Group has built powerful momentum. We know what's working and where the gaps are. Together, we can prioritize our efforts, align our strategies, and create lasting change.

Immediate Next Steps

- Launch Action Planning Committee to drive priorities and implementation
- Consider partnering with ALX Beyond the Classroom's Program Locator
- Create an advocacy agenda for budget and policy support

With strategic investment and coordinated action, we can transform our youth employment ecosystem into a powerful engine for economic mobility.

Long-Term Strategy

Clarify Working Group Goals

Establish shared goals and implementation plan moving forward

Build Data Infrastructure

Create shared data systems to track progress and show collective impact

Coordinate Employment Ecosystem

Foster collaboration across agencies to align strategies and avoid duplication

Invest in Capacity

Fund critical staff positions and diversify funding streams for employment programs

Strengthen Communication

Launch coordinated communications to help navigate pathways and opportunities

Streamline Partnership Processes

Centralize employer engagement with clear entry points and well-aligned partnerships

Remove Barriers for Youth

Simplify applications, address transportation concerns, and expand soft skills support

Join Us



Your partnership, whether through funding, employer engagement, program delivery, or advocacy—will help transform Alexandria's youth employment ecosystem. Together, we can ensure every young person in Alexandria has a clear path to economic opportunity.

Learn more by visiting our website or contact **Brandi Yee**, *Chief Program Officer*, at brandi.yee@ACTforAlexandria.org or (703) 739-7778

Partners at the Table

This work would not be possible without the commitment and collaboration from the following partners:

ACT for Alexandria
Alexandria Beyond the Classroom
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Alexandria City Council
Alexandria City Mayor's Office
Alexandria City Public Schools
Alexandria City Public Schools Board
Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services
Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Alexandria Restaurant Partners
Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Alexandria Workforce Development Center
AlexRenew
AT&T
Campagna Center
Capital Youth Empowerment Program
Casa Chirilagua
Chrysalis Development Corporation
Citi
Code Rising
Collaborative for Student Success
Comfort Family Foundation
Communities in Schools of Northern Virginia
Community Lodgings
Cornerstone Craftsman
Dominion Energy
Dream Project
Frank & Betty Wright Foundation
Go Pursue
Housing Alexandria
Inova
Ironworkers Union
Jennifer Gale
Kaiser Permanente
Kitchen of Purpose
Liberty's Promise
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Northern Virginia Community College
Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center
NoVA RAFT
Open Horizon Foundation
Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria
SCAN of Northern Virginia
Scholarship Fund of Alexandria
Urban Alliance
Virginia Career Works / Arlington/Alexandria Regional Workforce Council
Virginia Tech
WMATA



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