

From Classroom to Career

Ensuring Equitable Pathways to Youth Success

To build a brighter future for Alexandria youth and the broader community, our community is investing in solutions to strengthen the youth career readiness and employment system.

What happens after high school?

For many Alexandria youth, college is the goal. However, many students may not have a clear path forward. Stigma surrounding non-college pathways, limited awareness of available employment and work-based learning opportunities, and barriers such as language and transportation, further prevent youth from dreaming big and planning for future success.

56%

of teens do not feel prepared for the future

64%

say they have significant barriers to achieving future goals & aspirations

according to Gallup & the Walton Family Foundation

305

of 906 graduates in the class of 2023 did not pursue college (36%)

according to VA Dept. of Ed



Youth Employment & Career Technical Education (CTE) Working Group

In 2024, the Youth Employment & Career Technical Education (CTE) Working Group was established to better understand the support systems available to youth seeking fulfilling careers, meaningful employment opportunities, and brighter futures. The group brought together more than 50 leaders from city government, Alexandria City Public Schools, local nonprofits, funders, higher education institutions, and local and regional employers. Guided by an "open systems" framework, the group focused on breaking down silos, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and building trust within the community.



Youth Employment & CTE Working Group Objectives

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

What We Learned

Between April and October 2024, the group met bi-weekly to identify critical challenges and opportunities within our current ecosystem. Drawing on best practices and insights from communities across the country, key findings were identified to more effectively support Alexandria's young people.

Communication

There is great potential to **increase awareness of available opportunities** for youth and families, and creating a **program map** with a **cohesive referral system** will connect youth to valuable resources. Promoting **all the various opportunities** and pathways for students post-high school will open up new possibilities.

Employer Engagement

Building stronger **partnerships with employers** will help create a **robust pipeline of opportunities**. Expanding access to **work-based learning programs**, such as internships and apprenticeships, will provide valuable experiences for youth.

Data and Measurement

Establishing a **unified data structure** to track youth outcomes and program impact will enhance our ability to measure success. Setting **measurable goals based on regional needs** will ensure we are meeting the right objectives.

Engagement and Support

Prioritizing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and support services will foster greater youth development. Increasing engagement from parents, families, and mentors will **strengthen the support system**.

"As a member of the Youth Employment and CTE Working Group, the Workforce Development Center's Youth team has fostered valuable connections with community partners and employers. ACT plays a crucial role in uniting us to address shared challenges, enabling us all to more effectively support and serve the Alexandria community."

Katrina Ashmore, Chief of Workforce Development, City of Alexandria

The way forward is clear: we must focus on engagement, alignment, and commitment in order to have a meaningful impact.

Engagement

- Share key findings with City Council, School Board, and primary stakeholders to inspire informed decision-making.
- Host regular forums to celebrate successes, address challenges, and provide updates.
- Establish a dedicated working group for employers to foster collaboration and growth.

Alignment

- Create a comprehensive map of the ecosystem, highlighting existing programs, resources, and opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to enhance services, addressing gaps and eliminating overlaps.
- Designate a dedicated intermediary to seamlessly integrate youth career readiness into broader city goals.

Commitment

- Build trust through transparency, intentionality, and shared responsibility.
- Strengthen a shared purpose by fostering transparency in data and decision-making.
- Develop a collaborative data-sharing framework, establish clear success metrics, and monitor progress together.

