

FAQ

Framework, Guiding Principles, and Funding Proposal – \$5M **Investment in Youth Empowerment**



Members:

Councilman Terrance Freeman, Chair

Councilman Raul Arias

Councilman Ken Amaro, Vice Chair

Councilman Randy White

Councilmember Ju'Coby Pittman

John Everett, KHA (Ex-Officio)

Purpose

The **Special Committee on Youth Empowerment (YEC)** was established by City Council President **Kevin Carrico** and is chaired by **Council Member Terrance Freeman**.

The Committee will examine how Jacksonville can better align education, youth development, and workforce readiness so every young person has a clear path from high school to meaningful employment.

The YEC's work will ensure that the City's investments connect early learning, mentorship, job readiness, and training opportunities under a single coordinated vision — strengthening Jacksonville's workforce and reducing long-term public costs.

Why This Matters

- Jacksonville has **22,600 young people (ages 16–24)** who are not working and not in school — about **12.6% of local youth**, higher than the national average of 10.9%.
- Opportunity gaps widen dramatically after age 18, when many young people lose access to school-based supports but still lack entry points to jobs or training.
- Employers report growing shortages of reliable, skilled workers in **healthcare, construction, logistics, and technology**.
- City departments, schools, and nonprofit partners already invest millions in youth programming — but these efforts need stronger coordination, shared data, and clear transition pathways from school to work.
- While Jacksonville's economy continues to grow, the region is losing too many young adults just as they enter the workforce. Between 2019 and 2024, the Jacksonville area saw a **2% net loss of residents ages 20–29**, signaling that emerging talent often leaves for better-connected education and career opportunities elsewhere.
- The cost of doing nothing is substantial. National studies estimate that each disconnected young person costs taxpayers between **\$14,000 and \$37,000 per year** in lost earnings, tax revenue, and increased public expenses. With **22,600 disconnected youth in Jacksonville**, that represents an **annual opportunity cost of more than \$300 million**. Re-engaging even a fraction of this population can save millions in public costs while strengthening the local economy.

The YEC aims to further enhance the current workforce ecosystem — ensuring Jacksonville's future workforce is developed and retained right here at home.

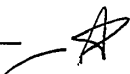
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Guiding Principles

Principle	Focus
What You Know	Strengthen education, digital skills, and applied learning that lead to employment.
Who You Know	Expand mentorship and professional networks that continue beyond high school.
Where You Go	Create safe community spaces that double as hands-on learning and innovation hubs.
How You Grow	Maintain mentorship, recreation, and career support through age 24.

Current Snapshot

- Youth (ages 14–24) make up about **13% of Jacksonville's total workforce**.
- Top youth employment sectors: **Food Service, Retail, and Transportation**.
- Employers identify top skill gaps as **adaptability, reliability, communication, and technology proficiency**.
- The region already has **228 registered apprenticeship employers** and more than **1,700 internship opportunities** — clear infrastructure for expanding work-based learning.
- In several neighborhoods — including **Brentwood, Norwood, and Royal Terrace** — prime-age employment lags the city average by more than 15 percentage points. 

These communities will serve as focus zones for **Youth Empowerment Hubs**, bringing workforce, recreation, and mentorship programs under one roof.

Strategic Focus Areas

1. **Education & Life Skills:** Build strong academic and digital foundations tied to real employment outcomes.
 2. **Mentorship & Social Capital:** Strengthen one-on-one relationships that open doors to education, training, and civic engagement.
 3. **Experiential Learning:** Expand paid internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning programs.
 4. **Safe Spaces:** Modernize parks and centers to host evening and weekend youth and young adult programming.
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Key Growth Industries

Jacksonville's strongest job and training opportunities are concentrated in five key sectors:

1. **Healthcare & Life Sciences** – high demand for certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, and telehealth support roles.
2. **Transportation, Logistics & Supply Chain** – steady growth in CDL, fleet maintenance, and automation.
3. **Construction & Infrastructure** – strong apprenticeship pipelines tied to city modernization projects.
4. **Technology & AI Services** – expanding need for digital literacy, cybersecurity, and AI fundamentals.
5. **Clean Energy & Advanced Manufacturing** – growth in solar installation, EV infrastructure, and robotics maintenance.

Emerging innovation sectors such as **creative digital media** and **aerospace mobility** present future training opportunities that keep youth engaged and local.

Policy Levers for the Committee

Challenge	Opportunity for Action
Disconnected youth after high school	Expand Youth Empowerment Hubs offering year-round education, mentorship, and employment support.
Employer skill shortages	Align training programs with in-demand credentials (CNA, CDL, IT, and healthcare support).
Limited exposure to innovation careers	Fund youth innovation labs and apprenticeships in tech, clean energy, and creative media.
Program duplication across agencies	Establish unified tracking through a citywide Results-Based Accountability (RBA) dashboard.

Implementation will be coordinated jointly by the **Office of Economic Development (OED)** and the **Kids Hope Alliance (KHA)** under the leadership of the **City's Director of Workforce Development**.

This alignment ensures that youth, young adult, and adult workforce investments move together under a single, data-driven strategy connecting opportunity, education, and economic growth.

Advisory and Coordination Partners:

- **JaxFWD (Future Workforce Development Collaborative):** Leads cross-sector strategy and funding alignment.
- **WIN (Workforce Innovations Network):** Serves as the citywide learning network connecting employers, nonprofits, and educators.
- **TAN (Talent Advancement Network – JAXUSA):** Provides real-time labor market data and industry engagement.

These groups will serve as **advisory and data partners**, supporting the YEC's implementation milestones while ensuring consistency across Jacksonville's workforce ecosystem.

Meeting Schedule

All meetings will be held in the **Lynwood Roberts Room (117 W. Duval Street, 1st Floor, St. James Building)**:

- **October 23, 2025 | 3:30 – 4:30 PM**
- **November 13, 2025 | 4:00 – 5:00 PM**
- **January 15, 2026 | 4:00 – 5:00 PM**
- **February 19, 2026 | 4:00 – 5:00 PM**
- **March 26, 2026 | 4:00 – 5:00 PM**

Each meeting will focus on one or more guiding principles and culminate in policy recommendations for City Council by **Spring 2026**.

Councilmember FAQ – October 2025

Purpose

The Youth Empowerment Committee is designed to **strengthen Jacksonville's workforce and reduce public costs** by coordinating existing programs, expanding proven models, and leveraging public/private investment.

The following questions address key fiscal and operational priorities identified by City Council.

1. Why does the City need a Youth Empowerment Committee?

Many existing youth programs lose contact with participants once they age out, leaving limited funding or structure to support young people as they transition into adulthood. The YEC will advocate to close this funding gap, expand support beyond age 18, and develop innovative programs and policies that address emerging youth and young adult needs. Its goal is to ensure continuity between school, work, and adulthood — strengthening coordination and impact without creating new bureaucracy.

2. How will this initiative save taxpayer dollars?

Disconnected youth represent one of Jacksonville's most costly and preventable labor force challenges. When young people disengage from work and education, the impact extends far beyond short-term earnings loss — it reduces the region's productive capacity and weakens the long-term labor supply.

In Jacksonville, this translates to more than \$300 million each year in lost wages, tax revenue, and increased public costs. Re-engaging even one-third of these young adults would restore over \$100 million in annual economic value, expand the city's available workforce, and reduce long-term reliance on public assistance. Reconnecting this population isn't just a social investment — it's an economic necessity.

3. Will this require new city funding?

No new general-fund dollars are requested. The YEC will optimize approximately **\$15 million in existing youth and workforce investments** (through KHA, OED, and JUMP) while leveraging state, federal, and private resources to extend impact beyond the initial phase.

4. What exactly will the funding support?

YEC funds will:

- **Expand the capacity of high-performing existing programs** already serving youth and young adults.
- **Create targeted pilots** where innovation or access gaps exist — for example, connecting digital-literacy training to industry certifications or expanding work-based learning for youth without transportation.
- **Build public-private partnerships** that sustain the ecosystem beyond the City's initial investment.

5. How will the City ensure accountability and prevent waste?

The City will **use the existing** Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework that measures employment outcomes, credentials earned, and cost per participant. Biannual performance reports will be submitted to City Council to ensure full transparency and fiscal discipline.

6. Who is responsible for implementation and oversight?

The **Director of Workforce Development** will coordinate implementation between the **Office of Economic Development (OED)** and **Kids Hope Alliance (KHA)**. This leadership model ensures clear lines of authority, eliminates duplication, and keeps all efforts aligned with Council's fiscal and performance expectations.

7. How will the private sector participate?

Existing workforce development networks such as **JaxFWD**, the **Workforce Innovation Network and Talent Advancement Network (JAXUSA)** will continue to partner with the City to advocate for policies, internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, and co-funded training programs that impact youth and young adults. Private employers are critical to long-term sustainability and will help shape demand-driven solutions.

8. What is the long-term fiscal benefit for taxpayers?

National cost-benefit analyses conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, the Brookings Institution, and the U.S. Department of Labor consistently find that every \$1 invested in coordinated youth workforce initiatives yields \$5–\$9 in long-term economic returns through higher wages, increased tax revenue, and reduced public spending.

Closing Statement

The Youth Empowerment Committee reflects **City Council's leadership and commitment to fiscal stewardship** — ensuring every youth and workforce dollar is coordinated, accountable, and results-driven.

This initiative strengthens Jacksonville's economy today while preparing the next generation to contribute, innovate, and stay local tomorrow.