



## FPN/CASI Grant Report



**GULF COAST  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

CHARLES & MARGERY  
**BARANCIK**  
foundation

  
**COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**  
OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Prepared by  
Deborah Chapman  
*CareerEdge Funders*  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*Talent4Tomorrow (T4T)*, a Sarasota County community collaborative focused on increasing college enrollment for high school graduates, was the first College Access Network in the state to raise \$50,000 in matching funds and receive the Florida Philanthropic Network's *College Access and Success Initiative* Grant, funded by Helios Education Foundation and The Kresge

Foundation. Gulf Coast Community Foundation led the grant application process, in partnership with CareerEdge Funders Collaborative and The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, and it has created an endowment fund for the initiative. The Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation and Community Foundation of Sarasota County contributed to the grant match as well. Funds were used to support six programs developed from community recommendations for increasing local post-secondary attainment rates:

- **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) Completion**
- ***Career Quest* Matched College Savings**
- **College Standardized Test Preparation**
- ***Career Chats* Speakers System**
- ***Where Are the Jobs?* Guide**
- ***College Explorations* Campus Visits**

The following pages provide background information on the *Talent4Tomorrow* initiative, as well as a synopsis of the objectives, implementations and outcomes of the six grant-funded programs.



The CASI grant offered the *Talent4Tomorrow* partners the opportunity to implement specific community recommendations for increasing college and credential attainment rates, and to pilot or expand programs with the goal of assessing their impact and scalability. These six grant-funded projects all positively affected college *Aspirations, Awareness, and Affordability* for local high school students. To summarize the promising outcomes of these initiatives:

- **FAFSA Completion** - Sarasota County was **1<sup>st</sup> in the state** for a third year in a row with the highest completion rate for a large school district and, according to the Florida College Access Network (FCAN), *T4T* efforts have increased Pell grants by **\$800,000** for local high school graduates.
- **Career Quest Matched College Savings** - **25 low-income** rising seniors are banked, earning income, and on a path to college through a unique and easily replicable scholarship model.
- **College Standardized Test Preparation** – **87 North Port High School** struggling seniors were able to graduate and have the opportunity to enter college programs after receiving concordant scores for the FSA. **52 juniors** are also on this path to graduation now that they have passed the reading test.
- **Career Chats Speakers System** - While a formalized system is still under development, **114 employers** have been engaged to connect with students at schools regarding local career opportunities.
- **Where Are the Jobs? Guide** - **9,000 guides** already have been distributed in the community and are being used in a variety of college & career planning settings, with a multitude of guides on order for the coming school year.
- **College Explorations Campus Visits** - **200 middle schoolers** had the opportunity to explore local college campuses and increase their aspirations for a post-secondary education, with additional college tours planned for 2018/19 including those for high schoolers.



## T4T PARTNERSHIP BACKGROUND



**Goal:** *To create a workforce talent pipeline by increasing post-secondary credential completion rates for young adults through specific strategies recommended by community members in a 2015 Talent4Tomorrow report. These strategies focus on increasing college **Affordability**, **Awareness** and **Aspirations**:*





## CURRENT T4T PARTICIPANTS

- CareerEdge Funders Collaborative
- The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce
- United Way Suncoast
- Unidos Now
- Sarasota School district, middle and high school administrators, counselors & advisors
- Education Foundation of Sarasota County
- Colleges: USF-Sarasota Manatee, Ringling College, State College of Florida, Keiser University, New College, Suncoast Technical College, UF Innovation Station



### Bridging the Gap Between K-12 and Higher Educational Systems

- Girls Inc.
- Take Stock in Children
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Big Brother Big Sisters
- ALSO Youth
- Y-Achievers
- Laurel Civic Association
- Rotary Futures
- CareerSource Suncoast
- Sarasota Libraries
- Junior Achievement
- SunTrust Bank
- Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Community Foundation of Sarasota County
- Local Employers

## Local College Access Networks in Florida







## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Affordability

### FAFSA Completion

**OBJECTIVE:** For the last three years, *Talent4Tomorrow* has put completion of FAFSA (the federal financial aid form) as its top priority. The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) reports that millions of dollars in untapped Pell grants are left on

the table each year in Sarasota County alone. The Partnership's objective is to increase the number of students receiving this college aid.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Community members have come together to increase awareness and offer support at designated FAFSA 'labs' at county high schools, with local college financial aid officers and other volunteers helping families navigate the online application process. New strategies were put in place this school year to engage more students and improve the county's 2016/17 FAFSA completion rate of 45.5%. This



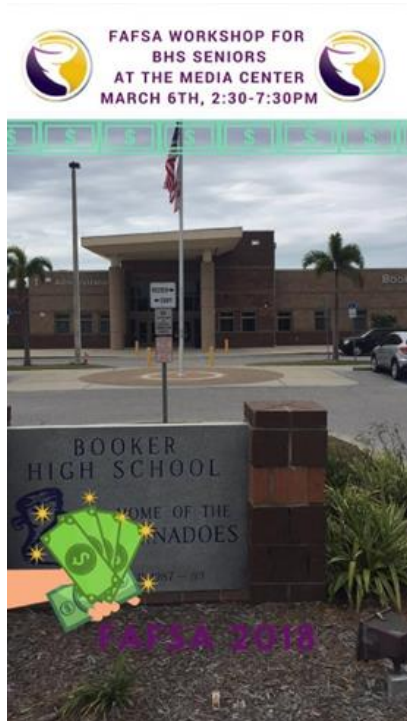
year, the partnership used a more dynamic advertising strategy to reach and interest students in the workshops. These techniques included announcements on high school news channels, prizes leading up to the events, goal

thermometers posted at schools, gift card raffles at labs, classroom presentations by *T4T* partners, and dollar bill reminder flyers (above). *Unidos Now* also organized high school clubs that helped promote the labs. And CareerEdge piloted Snapchat geofilters at Booker High School as a social media prompt. A few days leading up to the FAFSA workshop, CareerEdge released a filter on the Snapchat App announcing the opportunity for "free money."





This frame could be added to Snapchat photos and then shared with friends. In the first day of the filter's run, the information was viewed over 3,500 times when sent to friends or viewed in a user's story. The Snapchat strategy proved an effective way to interact directly with students in a medium they use daily. Grant dollars provided for all lab collateral, printing, event food, goal thermometers, supplies, raffled Wal-Mart gift cards, as well as the Snapchat geofilter fees.



**OUTCOMES:** For the third year in a row, Sarasota County ended the FAFSA Challenge #1 in the state for a large school district, with 48% of high school seniors completing the FAFSA by

April 1, a 2% increase from the prior year. Booker High School had the second highest increase in the district with a 9% improvement, second only to Sarasota Military Academy. According to FCAN, T4T efforts have brought in an additional \$800,000 in Pell Grants, and they estimate students received \$2.3 million in total grants for 2018.



**NEXT STEPS:** T4T plans to develop and use additional social media and student-focused strategies this year to continue to improve the county's FAFSA rates, including creating a student advisory council and expanding college financial education workshops. It is also working with FCAN to improve the process for identifying which seniors have not completed the FAFSA, so partners can reach out to these students directly.



Affordability

## Career Quest Matched College Savings

Aspirations



**OBJECTIVE:** According to a University of Kansas study, children with up to \$500 saved for post-secondary school are three times more likely to attend and four times more likely to graduate from college than children with no savings account.

CareerEdge and United Way Suncoast partnered to create an evidence-based matched college savings program to incentivize students to save for college,

and to demonstrate an innovative scholarship model for local foundations to use.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** *Career Quest* is a matched college savings and career planning pilot program for 25 Sarasota County 11<sup>th</sup> grade students from low-income families. It includes the following components:

- **Youth Employment Opportunity:** Students are connected to jobs in the community, including paid internships at partner organizations in high-demand sectors. Internship employers are reimbursed up to \$1,000 per intern.
- **Matched College Savings:** A no-fee savings account is opened for each participating student through a partnership with SunTrust Bank. Students saving a minimum of \$25 per month for the two years of their junior and senior years in high school will have up to \$500 of their savings matched 4 to 1, for a possible \$2,000 in additional college savings.
- **Career Planning and Financial Education** is provided to participants on topics such as career exploration, banking, budgeting, money management, credit analysis, college savings, taxes, etc. Junior Achievement, SunTrust Bank and CareerEdge have provided these classes for the pilot.







Participating students represent all Sarasota County district high schools and the charter school Sarasota Military Academy, with 16 girls and 9 boys. Participants were recruited through one of several mentor-based youth organizations which provide ongoing coaching and support throughout the summer and school year. These include: Big



Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Unidos Now, Take Stock in Children, Girls Inc. and ALSO Youth. There is no GPA eligibility. Students' low-income eligibility was determined based on one of the following three criteria: family income at the threshold of 200% of the federal poverty level, or free/reduced lunch eligibility, or if the family received the earned income tax credit.

**OUTCOMES:** Year 1 of the two-year program has produced the following:

- All 25 high school juniors are banked and have started saving for college.
- 7 (28%) have already saved \$500 or more in year 1, to earn the full 4 to 1 match of \$2,000.
- A total of \$7,100 has been saved so far by students, with an average savings of \$300 per student.
- 8 students have participated in professional internships; 5 have done job shadowing; 19 are employed during the school year.
- 23 have completed financial and career planning workshops.

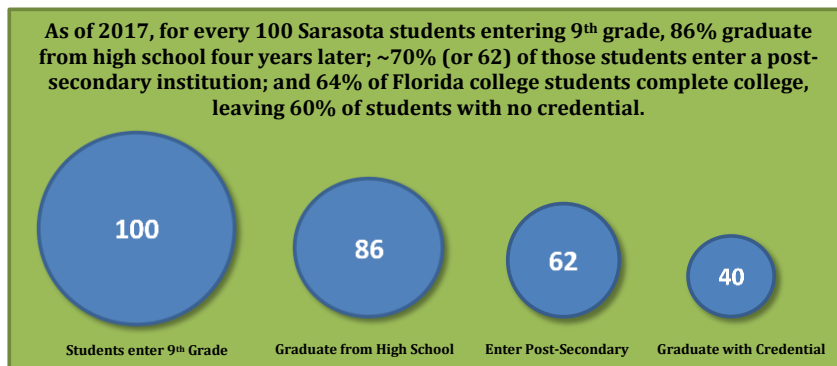
**NEXT STEPS:** The *Career Quest* program was piloted to make the case for this unique scholarship model. Most scholarships are either merit or needs-based, while this is a rewards-based system of matching a student's college savings. CareerEdge is working with local community foundations to explore ways to scale the program in order to offer the opportunity to more low-income youth.

## College Standardized Test Preparation

**OBJECTIVE:** Given that Florida's *Bright Futures Scholarship* (BFS) requires minimum SAT or ACT test results, this program's objective was to provide students with test preparation resources to improve their scores and access the award, which currently covers up to 100% of state tuition and fees. The project began as a pilot in North Port High School (NPHS), which has the largest number of low-income students in the district, to provide a test prep instructor to work with students who are just below the test threshold requirements. However, this objective quickly shifted when school administrators expressed a stronger need for the test preparation services to be focused on struggling, at-risk students who can use ACT or SAT Reading scores as a substitute for the challenging Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), which is the Common Core exam required for graduation.



### Leaks In the Workforce Pipeline

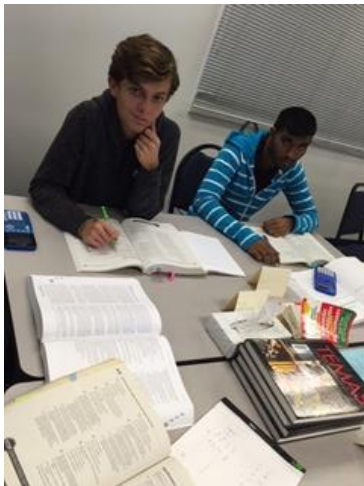
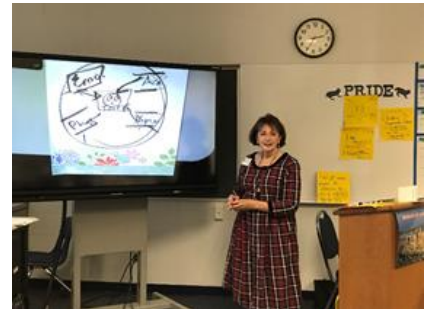


Therefore, this project expanded to include both Bright Futures and high school graduation goals. As the graph to the left shows, high school graduation is a critical component of credential attainment rates. Another project

expansion was based on research around school-day administrations of the SAT or ACT, which show higher scores than Saturday testing, and a 10% increase in overall college-going rates. CareerEdge assisted NPHS with acquiring a \$5,600 supplemental grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation to help pay for a school-day ACT test administration for 146 students in April 2018.



**DESCRIPTION:** A total of 173 juniors and seniors worked directly with the grant-funded test prep instructor, 105 of those targeting the BFS and 68 focused on graduation. An additional 70 students worked with a reading teacher who attended the prep classes. An after-school workshop was offered in the fall and a 6-week school-day program was provided in the spring. Students in a *Reading Intensive* course attended twice weekly classes, and the BFS class met weekly with two different cohorts who signed up to attend during their elective period. All students received a test prep book and the school library and career center received additional test bank resources.



**OUTCOMES:** In terms of the school-day ACT test administration, 146 students sat for the ACT Reading section, 98 Juniors and 48 Seniors. 71% (or 34) of the seniors and 53% (or 52) of the juniors passed. According to Assistant Principal Shannon Fusco, this is “Huge!” when you compare it to a typical 10% passage rate on an FSA retake, and since many of these students were taking the ACT for the first time. The juniors who passed have removed the biggest obstacle to a high school diploma (the reading test), and now have access to other free technical and college education, or they have more room in their schedules to make up other

credits. The average ACT score was 19.75, which exceeded the school-wide average over the last four years of 19.45. Some of the test prep students also reached the concordant scores using SAT or the state test called PERT. School-wide FSA concordant graduates rose from 37 seniors in 2017 to 87 in 2018. In terms of the BFS students, eligibility data will be available in fall 2018. Half of the test prep students were juniors, so their eligibility data will be available in 2019.

**NEXT STEPS:** NPHS is thrilled with the impact of the program and would like to replicate it. They are dedicating a teacher to focus on this standardized test preparation and looking for assistance once again in covering the school-day testing fees. The administration plans to offer the SAT in the fall and the ACT in the spring.

## Career Chats Speakers System

**OBJECTIVE:** In the fall of 2017, CareerEdge awarded the Education Foundation of Sarasota County a \$5,000 sub-grant to develop a speaker's bureau system called *Career Chats*. The purpose of the program was to provide the Sarasota County school district with a process for identifying and scheduling a variety of professionals from the community willing to visit classrooms to share their personal career journeys. The program's objectives included:

- To expose students to local professionals in a variety of occupations
- To increase students' understanding of potential college pathways linked to careers in the community
- To help students learn about how to prepare for and be successful in their college and career planning
- To inspire students to start thinking about potential career opportunities and how to prepare for college and careers

**DESCRIPTION:** The target audience for the program's development phase was identified as district middle school students, which includes eight schools with 6,500 students. The agreement with the Education Foundation included the following action items:

1. *Career Chat* volunteers will be recruited and vetted for presentations at assemblies, classrooms, career centers, etc.
2. Recruitment will occur through referrals and recommendations of local partners such as the Sarasota Chamber, Rotary Futures, Junior Achievement, trade organizations, CareerEdge, etc.
3. The target is 25 – 40 participants for Spring 2018
4. Vetting, training, and Level 1 background checks will be conducted







5. Teacher and student preparation handouts and surveys will be developed
6. A master schedule with presenter availability will be created
7. Bookings through the newly-hired middle school career advisors will occur in the Spring 2018 semester
8. A master booking tool will be built for the fall 2018 rollout



**OUTCOMES:** While the plan was to implement the *Career Chats* program at all the middle schools, two schools participated, with one guest speaker at Woodland Middle presenting to 32 students, and five community representatives presenting to 60 students at Heron Creek, for a total of six speakers. The Education Foundation also received a separate United Way grant to implement a disaster



simulation at Booker Middle, in partnership with University of South Florida. This project brought in 34 speakers for school-wide presentations. To date, a master booking tool has not been created for a fall 2018 rollout as planned. According to the Education Foundation, barriers to the program's implementation included that the new career advisors were not ready to engage in the process and there was turnover at the district level.

**NEXT STEPS:** The Education Foundation has decided to maintain the list of guest speakers (currently at 114) and schedule Career Chats with each school's unique needs in mind. They plan to create the master booking tool, allowing career advisors from each school to contact potential presenters electronically. Given that CareerEdge and the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce were involved in supporting several high school-level career fairs throughout the last school year, the Sarasota County School District Superintendent suggested that these organizations also explore developing a speaker's bureau system as a community-based resource for teachers, advisors and counselors.

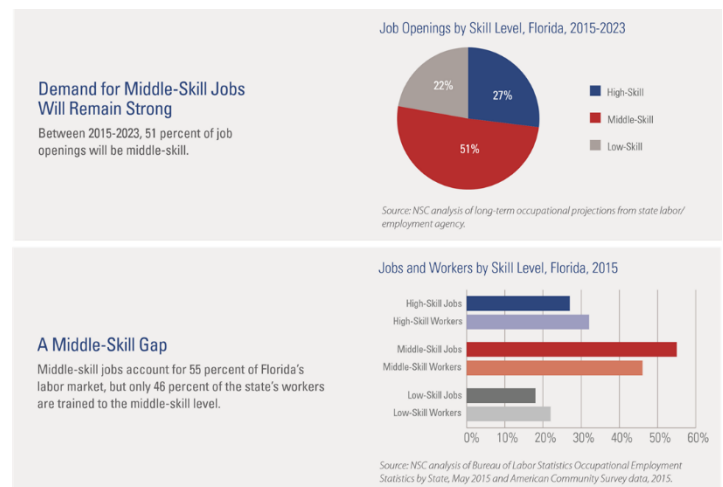
## Where Are the Jobs? Guide



**OBJECTIVE:** In 2015, community members voted on the highest priority initiatives to address based on the *Talent4Tomorrow Scan*. FAFSA completion was ranked first, with career awareness resources second. According to Georgetown University, labor market data and wages should be included in the career counseling process. Based on this research and input from a *T4T* Action Team, CareerEdge developed a guide called *Where Are the Jobs?* to provide students, parents, guidance counselors and mentors with information about high-demand jobs in southwest Florida

and the educational pathways for obtaining them. The intent of the guide is to offer students quality career options while also helping local employers to

increase their pipeline of skilled workers, which in turn will foster growth and prosperity in the region. The majority of jobs in the future will require some education after high school, but most will not require a four-year college degree. According to the National Skills Coalition, more than half of Florida jobs will require a technical certificate or 2-year degree (see charts to right). These middle-skill jobs make up the largest part of America's and Florida's labor markets. *Where Are the Jobs?* highlights these alternative post-secondary paths and offers readers a resource to enhance career and college planning.





**DESCRIPTION:** The guide provides examples of careers organized by Technical College Certifications, 2-year A.S. Degrees, and 4-year Bachelor's Degrees and above. CareerEdge used the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's Supply/ Demand Gap report for the Southwest Florida region, accessed January 2017, to identify those jobs in highest demand and their average wages (which were rounded). Sample jobs listed were chosen based on



demand and career ladder opportunities at livable wages. Low-paying jobs with no educational requirements, such as retail, lawn maintenance, front-line hospitality, etc., were not included in the guide. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Suncoast served as the test organization to partner with CareerEdge on the design and content's applicability for its students and mentors.

**OUTCOMES:** With the grant funds, 9,000 guides were printed over the last year and *Where Are the Jobs?* has exceeded all expectations in its popularity and



usefulness as a career awareness resource in the community. It is being used in Sarasota County middle and high school classrooms, career centers, libraries, youth organization programs, community centers, churches, etc. Other *Local College Access Networks* across the state of Florida have asked for the guide so they can share it with their students and/or replicate the document for their region.

**NEXT STEPS:** CareerEdge expects vigorous demand for the guide in the coming school year and will use grant funds to print additional copies. Labor data also will be monitored to update job and wage components every two years, with the next iteration of the guide planned for 2019.





Aspirations

## College Explorations Campus Visits

**OBJECTIVE:** In order to encourage student aspirations for post-secondary education, research indicates that it is vital for students to be able to see themselves as college students. College campus visits are one way of encouraging



this college-going identity.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Gear Up program, arranging for students to visit campuses is a relatively inexpensive way for students from low-income and first-generation families who are least likely to visit a campus on their own to get a feel for college.

**DESCRIPTION:** CareerEdge, the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, and the Cross College Alliance (a consortium of local higher education institutions) partnered in the 2017/18 school year to provide local college campus visits for Sarasota County 7th graders. This grade was chosen based on the belief that these students would have time to explore college and careers before making their high school pathway choices in the second semester of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The *College Explorations* tours were developed to increase post-secondary aspirations and to raise awareness about the many resources available to students. The visits included guided tours and activities that allowed the students to get a taste of college life and the importance of earning a higher-education credential. Five colleges participated: USF-Sarasota Manatee, Ringling College, New College, Suncoast Technical College and State College of Florida. The program was seen as a pilot for possible inclusion in the successful







*EdExplore SRQ*, which offers mini grants to teachers for community field trips to arts, cultural and scientific resources as well as local businesses, all aligned with curriculum standards. The colleges designed the visits, the Education Foundation provided administrative support with scheduling and logistics, and CareerEdge



paid for the bus transportation costs through the CASI grant funds.

**OUTCOMES:** One group of approximately 25 students from each of the eight district middle schools participated in the *College Explorations* pilot, impacting approximately 200 students. While the goal was to target low-income and/or first-generation students, participants were actually chosen based on being in an art or

career and technical education (CTE) elective course. Feedback from both teachers and students was extremely positive, and there was widespread interest in the replication of the *College Explorations* campus visits for the coming school year. CareerEdge created a [video](#) to showcase the program:

<http://careeredgefund.org/college-explorations-program/>

**NEXT STEPS:** The Education Foundation has indicated that it wants to manage the expansion of the *College Explorations* program, targeting middle schoolers for 2018/19, and it does not intend to have the program embedded within *EdExplore SRQ*. CareerEdge has recommended expanding class visits to 40 or 50 students per trip to better utilize the school bus expense and to allow more students to participate. The prioritization of low-income and/or first-generation students was also encouraged. CareerEdge is working with the high school advisors to possibly cover transportation costs for college campus visits for 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.



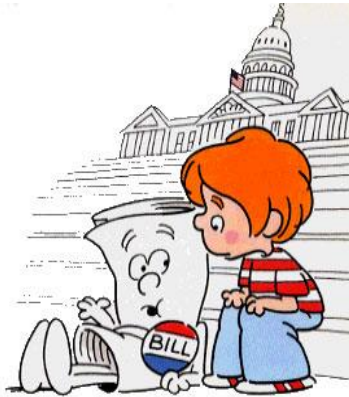


## T4T PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON

In addition to delineated next steps for the six funded programs, *Talent4Tomorrow* has the following projects currently in process:



**DATA:** CareerEdge is working with the Sarasota school district on the use of the National Student Clearinghouse “*Student Tracker Report*,” a nationwide source of college enrollment and degree data, to monitor post-secondary results for county graduates by each high school, with demographic disaggregation. The first data uploads are in process as of summer 2018. *T4T* is also working with the district on a possible senior survey to better track post-secondary plans for high school 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and to help connect them to job opportunities.



**POLICY:** *Talent4Tomorrow* is participating in an FCAN Policy Workgroup to advocate for education and workforce legislation at both the state and federal levels focusing on issues such as Pell Grant eligibility, FAFSA simplification, apprenticeship pathways and Bright Futures Scholarship criteria.



**CAREER PLANNING:** The Partnership also continues to support efforts to connect community members to quality career exploration resources. As an example, *T4T* is working with the state representative of [Florida Shines](#), a state-funded online career exploration tool, to provide training to local youth organizations, mentors and school advisors/counselors on the use of this free and comprehensive career planning system.



## Partnership Funders

