OPPORTUNITY WORKS

A national initiative led by JFF shows the power of carefully designed interventions to improve the lives of low-income young people who are not in school or fully employed. Opportunity Works (OW), which scaled JFF’s “Back on Track model,” had remarkable results over three years, as illustrated below. Learn more about OW on the next page.

Why We Care

4.6 million
Opportunity youth (OY) are locked out of the labor market

These young people ages 16 to 24 do not have a path to family-sustaining work. The consequences are dire for them, for our economy, and for our society.

Back on Track models make a difference

Through OW, local “anchor” organizations received funding and coaching to implement the Back on Track model for successful transitions to postsecondary education and training.

Because of Opportunity Works

2x more
OY enrolled in postsecondary education

The Urban Institute found that Back on Track’s postsecondary bridging model made an impressive positive impact. Twice as many opportunity youth from OW enrolled in postsecondary programs as opportunity youth in a comparison group.

6x more
OY who are young men of color enrolled in postsecondary education

OW had an even greater impact on opportunity youth who are young men of color, a population historically underrepresented in higher education. Six times more OW young men of color enrolled in postsecondary programs as young men of color from a comparison group.

What This Means

Opportunity Works has a consistent, large, positive impact on postsecondary enrollment, in particular for young men of color. The magnitude of the impact is unusually large, more than doubling postsecondary enrollment overall and increasing it nearly six times over for young men of color.

Email lallen@jff.org for more information.
National Effort Opens Doors for **2,000+ OPPORTUNITY YOUTH**

Opportunity Works served nearly 2,200 low-income young people ages 16 to 24 who were not in school or fully employed. The national three-year initiative was led by JFF with the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions.

**Structure of Opportunity Works**

In each geographic area, JFF contracted with a community-based organization that served as a local “anchor” to spearhead the work. Each anchor assembled local partners—including other CBOs, employers, community colleges, alternative high schools, and training organizations—to provide pathways and supports connecting OY to education and employment success.

**Core Features of Back on Track**

The Back on Track model serves several opportunity youth populations, including those with and those without a high school diploma. The Postsecondary/Career Bridging Phase prepares young people who have a diploma but are not in school or work, with a strong start on college and career success.

**Postsecondary/Career Bridging**

Builds college/career-ready skills and provides informed transition counseling

- A focus on college knowledge and success strategies, and employment readiness
- Personalized guidance on connection to “best bet” programs of study

**Opportunity Works Across the Country**

From 2015 to 2018, Opportunity Works operated in seven urban areas.

Research note: The comparison group consisted of underemployed, out-of-school youth drawn from intervention programs that were located in the same regions as the Opportunity Works sites but offered a different set of services.