



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



The Community Funding Accelerator (CFA) supports communities in securing and deploying public funding to strengthen cradle-to-career education and workforce pathways.



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A Word from the CFA Team



When we launched the program, our goal was simple but bold: to remove the barriers that keep grassroots organizations from accessing and deploying funding effectively.

Over the past three years, the Community Funding Accelerator (CFA) has evolved from an ambitious pilot into a proven, evidence-driven platform for community-led change. When we launched the program, our goal was simple but bold: to remove the barriers that keep grassroots organizations from accessing and deploying funding effectively, and to create a pathway for community leaders to drive solutions of their own design. Today, looking back on our journey, we are proud to share just how far this vision has come — and how far our communities have taken it.

From the earliest days of the pilot, we saw clear signs of possibility. Local organizations — many of whom had long been under-served by traditional funding systems — demonstrated resilience and a deep understanding of the needs around them. The CFA platform became a space where their ideas could be tested, strengthened, and scaled. Year by year, the program has expanded its reach, diversified its partners, and refined its model based on real-world learning.

This report highlights the milestones that shaped our growth: the communities we served, the grants we helped apply for and win, the development of robust pathway programs, and the measurable impact of community-designed initiatives. It also captures the stories behind the numbers — stories of community organizations navigating uncertainty, unlocking new capabilities and partnerships, and achieving outcomes that were once deemed out of reach.

Our journey since the pilot has reaffirmed what we believed from the start: when communities are trusted and equipped to lead, the results are transformative. As we move into the next phase of our program, we remain committed to elevating local leadership, strengthening collaboration, and building pathways from cradle to career that make lasting impact not only possible, but inevitable.

We are grateful to every participant, partner, and champion who has contributed to CFA's growth. This report is, above all, a reflection of your dedication and your belief in the power of community-driven change.

Sincerely,

The Community Funding Accelerator Team

Our Story



To date, CFA has supported over 50 coalitions to apply for nearly \$600 million in competitive grants, winning and implementing a total of \$296M+ in public awards — and counting.

CFA launched in 2023 to help communities secure and implement public funding that strengthens cradle-to-career education and workforce pathways. It was created to address a clear need: communities had promising, evidence-based ideas but lacked the capacity to navigate complex federal funding opportunities.

From the start, our mission has been to ensure all communities — especially those historically under-resourced — can compete for public dollars and turn them into meaningful outcomes for learners and workers. Early pilots helped partners identify high-value funding opportunities, build strong coalitions, and submit competitive applications that unlocked significant investment.

What began as a focused effort to make federal funding more accessible has grown into a broader model for advancing economic mobility and supporting community-led initiatives — and we are just getting started.

CFA's impact extends beyond funding, providing hands-on support that strengthens systems and drives long-term impact. This includes developing curricula, building tools to track progress and coordinate partners, understanding local and future workforce needs to create stronger programs, and helping organizations grow in key areas like communications, operations, and engaging their communities.

Since 2023, CFA's work has resulted in:

57

Communities Supported

\$296M+

Public Funding Secured

Our Mission

CFA supports communities in securing and deploying public funding to strengthen cradle-to-career education and workforce pathways.

We partner with organizations and communities committed to expanding economic mobility by building their capacity to better serve learners and workers.

We identify relevant funding opportunities, build coalitions, and provide comprehensive technical and implementation support to help partners submit winning applications and turn dollars into tangible results.



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Our Goals



1

Accelerate Funding

CFA helps communities define their vision, develop strategies and quality programs, and secure the funding needed to implement them.



2

Deliver Impact

CFA partners with communities on implementation, project delivery, and course correction to build durable systems for lasting impact.



3

Share Knowledge

CFA advances the cradle-to-career ecosystem through grant and funding tracking, and free open-access capacity-building guides, toolkits, and webinars.



Where We Work

CFA works with communities across the United States, from small towns and rural regions to mid-sized cities and major metropolitan areas.

Our partners include coalitions in rural areas such as Poplar Bluff, Missouri and Yakima Valley, Washington, and urban centers like Birmingham, Alabama, and El Paso, Texas.

By engaging with communities of all sizes, multi-partner consortia, and multi-state teams, CFA helps ensure that public funding for education and workforce programs reaches anywhere there is a need.

How We Work

We partner with nonprofits, government agencies, and community organizations advancing scalable cradle-to-career education and workforce programs. We work with state and local education and workforce agencies to test and expand evidence-based approaches. CFA helps partners turn ideas into action and funding into impact. Our support focuses on:



Raising Awareness

Clarifying funding opportunities and unlocking resources for young people.



Incubating Ideas

Matching community needs with the right grants.



Building Competitive Applications

Assembling coalitions and crafting winning proposals.



Supporting Implementation

Guiding partners to launch successful programs once funding is secured.



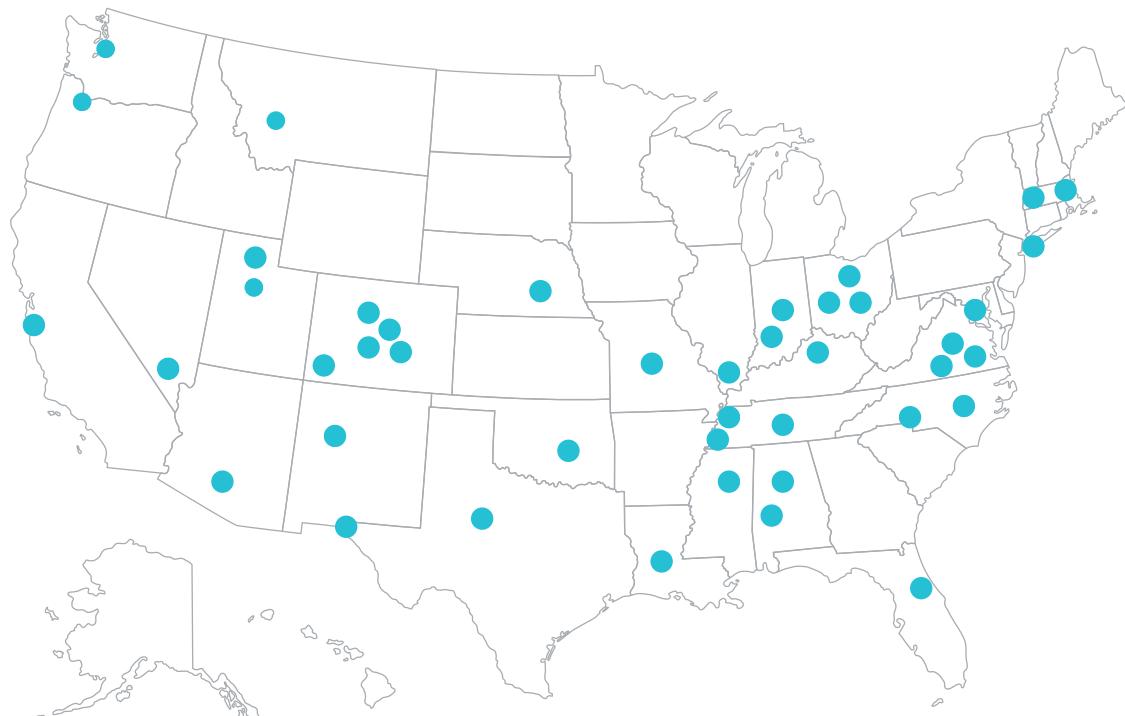
Building Lasting Capacity

Empowering partners with the strategies and tools to fund their work for years to come.

CFA Impact

To date, CFA has helped communities win over **\$296M+** in public dollars and secure **\$130M+** in leveraged funds.

CFA has
supported 57*
communities
across the US.



*List of communities on p.11

CFA at a Glance

- Healthcare Science
- Quantum Technology
- Advanced Manufacturing

Core Impact Areas

40%

Grant Win Rate

61

Grant Applications Submitted

\$681M+

Grant Funding Requested

CFA SPOTLIGHT

Building Nursing Career Pathways in Rural Missouri Heartland Forward



In 2023, Poplar Bluff, Missouri faced a critical nursing shortage and limited pathways into healthcare careers.

"We have heard repeatedly from legislators, community leaders, and patients that the nursing shortage is a major concern for healthcare," said Maria Rodriguez-Alcala, former Program Director for Health and Wellness at Heartland Forward.

Heartland Forward envisioned a nursing-career pipeline, and CFA helped make it a reality — identifying a federal funding opportunity, strengthening partnerships across schools, hospitals, and community organizations, and preparing a competitive grant application.

The collaboration secured a **\$1.5 million Department of Labor grant**, enabling local partners to launch programs connecting students to high-demand healthcare careers.

To date, **104 individuals (all from rural or marginalized communities)** have joined the pathway program, **16 have started apprenticeships**, and **1,000+ high school students** have attended the annual healthcare career fair.



Birmingham, Alabama

Workforce Strategy

Building Pathways to Economic Mobility in Birmingham

In Birmingham, a city with deep industrial roots and persistent economic inequities, a new investment is opening pathways to opportunity in several northwest neighborhoods.

In 2024, Birmingham secured nearly \$20 million through the federal Economic Development Administration's Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program to launch the Reinvest Birmingham Recompete Plan — a comprehensive effort to expand workforce training, entrepreneurship, childcare, transportation, and long-term economic mobility in communities including North Birmingham, Pratt, Smithfield, and Northside.

Working closely with CFA, the city convened more than 30 employers and community partners across key sectors, establishing critical relationships to advance meaningful progress. CFA provided technical assistance to align governance, develop a citywide workforce strategy linking education to priority industries, and establish clear systems for performance and accountability.

In 2025, CFA and city leaders moved from planning to implementation, launching a workforce strategy that translates the grant into action. The strategy maps local labor-market needs and outlines a coordinated approach to training and apprenticeships, transit access, childcare expansion, and support for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Reinvest Birmingham shows how CFA's work goes beyond securing funding — helping communities turn ambition into actionable plans that connect residents to skills, jobs, and a more inclusive local economy.



The initiative aims to **engage 5,000 residents** and enroll at least **3,000 in career-pathway training**, while targeting the creation of **1,500 new jobs** across construction, advanced manufacturing, childcare, healthcare, and other high growth sectors.

Photo: A. Stewart, Reinvest Plan Officer, leads a discussion with employer and education stakeholders in Birmingham (Aug. '25)



Yakima Valley, Washington

Workforce Ecosystem

Expanding Opportunity in the Yakima Valley

In Yakima Valley, a diverse rural community in southern Washington, a new partnership is reshaping what's possible for thousands of children and families.

In 2025, CFA and Yakima Valley Partners for Education (YVPE) applied for more than \$10M to strengthen the region's cradle-to-career ecosystem. The partnership offers a model for rural and underserved regions: elevate community voice, build shared strategy, and invest in sustainable funding that lasts.

YVPE, housed at Heritage University, is a collective impact network of schools, universities, and community organizations working to improve outcomes for Yakima Valley youth. With a strong vision and leadership supported by CFA partners including StriveTogether and Partners for Rural Impact, YVPE has taken major steps to align local organizations and expand support.



The effort will focus on YVPE's priority areas, including **childhood literacy, post-secondary access and success, career opportunities, and wellness**. Equally important, it strengthens the region's educational infrastructure so programs remain stable over years, not just for grant or funding cycles.

Formed in 2020, the network now includes more than 30 organizations. Together, they've boosted participation in community literacy programs and raised postsecondary financial-aid application rates well above the state average — important progress toward educational and economic mobility — but demand still far exceeds available resources.

CFA is helping YVPE diversify and grow its funding base and sharpen long-term strategy. The work will focus on securing a mix of public and private funding to support a community-defined vision, deepen impact, and expand services to more residents.



Jacksonville, Florida

City-wide investment in the future

Transforming Workforce Outcomes in Jacksonville

Across Jacksonville, a bold new investment is reimagining what's possible for talent citywide.

In 2025, CFA joined forces with Kids Hope Alliance (KHA) to secure \$18 million in new funding that will serve as a transformational injection of resources to build out the city's career pathways for residents that have not benefited from Jacksonville's robust growth.

KHA serves as Jacksonville's central youth-services agency, coordinating a coalition of over 100 partner organizations to deliver more than 140 programs throughout Duval County. These programs span early childhood supports, after-school enrichment, mental health services, internships, summer jobs, and workforce readiness.

A particular area of concern is around career readiness and workforce development: Jacksonville currently allocates around \$18M annually, while peer cities typically invest closer to \$50M. This funding gap has limited training slots, support services, and long-term stability of programming. The KHA and CFA partnership facilitates embedded technical assistance, strategic planning, and capacity building to help KHA and its partners tap state, federal, and private funding sources to bridge the gap and catalyze a dramatic scale-up in services.

This collaboration offers a model for growing cities: align government and community partners, apply strategic funding design, and invest in sustainable, scalable pathways so every person has a real shot at success from the classroom to — and through — a meaningful career.



With **\$18M** in new funding, this partnership aims to expand worker re-skilling opportunities, diversify and improve work-based learning experiences, mobilize employers more effectively, and **stabilize Jacksonville's worker-serving infrastructure** for the long haul.

Photo: Jacksonville workforce partners convene to shape a citywide strategy (Oct. '25)



CFA communities' winning programs are projected to deliver significant outcomes over the next 10 years:

500K+

K-12 Students Reached

10K+

Jobs Created

40+

Career Pathway Programs Created

Our Next Chapter

The Road Ahead

CFA will remain committed to helping communities nationwide meet the moment, strengthen their programs, and grow amid evolving economic and policy changes. In the year ahead, we will advance:

Holistic funding strategies

Advancing braided and blended funding approaches that align local, state, federal, and private dollars to support sustainable, long-term programming.

Community fundraising capacity

Supporting communities to develop strong fundraising plans and systems that enable implementation, scale, and long-term impact.

Capacity-building tools

Launching new toolkits and guides to help communities prepare more quickly and effectively for a changing grant and funding landscape.

Thought leadership and communications

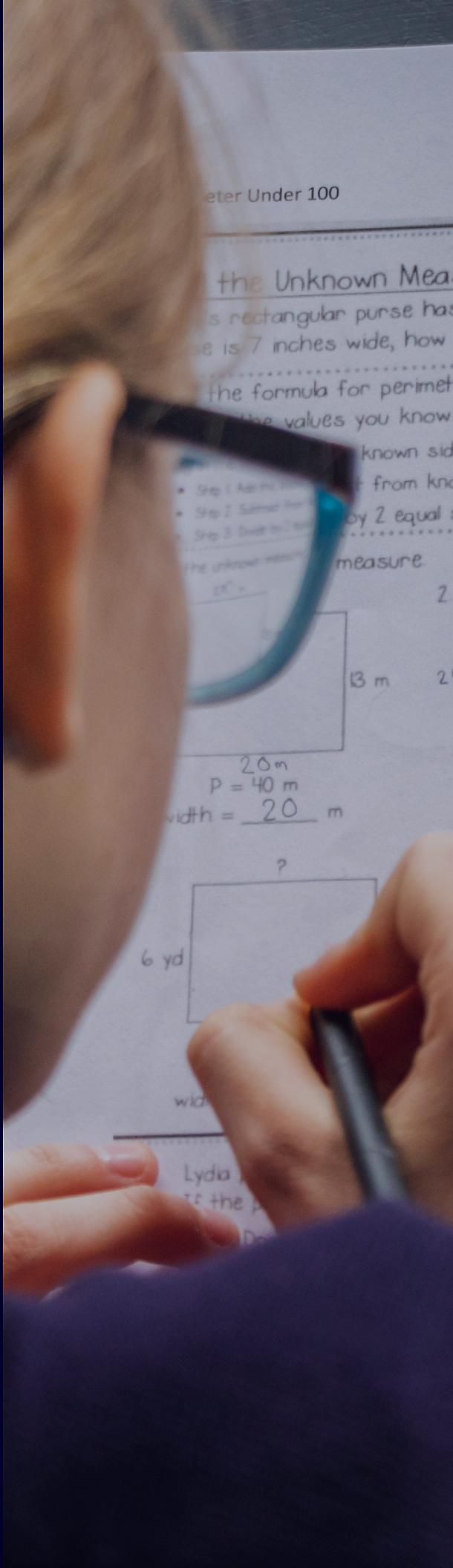
Strengthening CFA's role as a field leader through a revitalized newsletter, expanded digital presence, and community-based storytelling.





Communities Supported

- Albuquerque, NM
- Arlington, VA
- Bentonville, AR
- Birmingham, AL
- Bloomington, IN
- Boston, MA
- Boulder, CO
- Centennial, CO
- Charlotte, NC
- College Station, TX
- Columbus, OH
- Dayton, OH
- Demopolis, AL
- Denver, CO
- Disputanta, VA
- Durango, CO
- El Paso, TX
- Everett, MA
- Helena, MT
- Indianapolis, IN
- Jacksonville, FL
- Kaysville, UT
- Lexington, KY
- Lincoln, NE
- Logan, UT
- Lynchburg, VA
- Memphis, TN
- Morganton, NC
- Nashville, TN
- Nelsonville, OH
- New Orleans, LA
- New York, NY
- North Las Vegas, NV
- Phoenix, AZ
- Portland Metro, OR
- Raleigh, NC
- Rio Grande, OH
- Ripley, TN
- Roscoe, TX
- Seminole, OK
- Stanford, CA
- Starkville, MS
- Toppenish, WA
- Vienna, IL
- Washington, DC



Interested in working together?

CFA announces new opportunities for technical assistance through our website and newsletter.

Sign up for our newsletter at:

communityfundingaccelerator.org

Get in touch:

info@communityfundingaccelerator.org

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