



Opening Doors

New Investments in Racial Economic Equity

AT A GLANCE

A post-2020 investment surge spurs innovative approaches to driving economic advancement for Black Americans.

Developed by



NOVEMBER 2022

Contents

06_____

Understanding
the Landscape

27_____

Trends and
Opportunities

34_____

Innovators to Watch

48_____

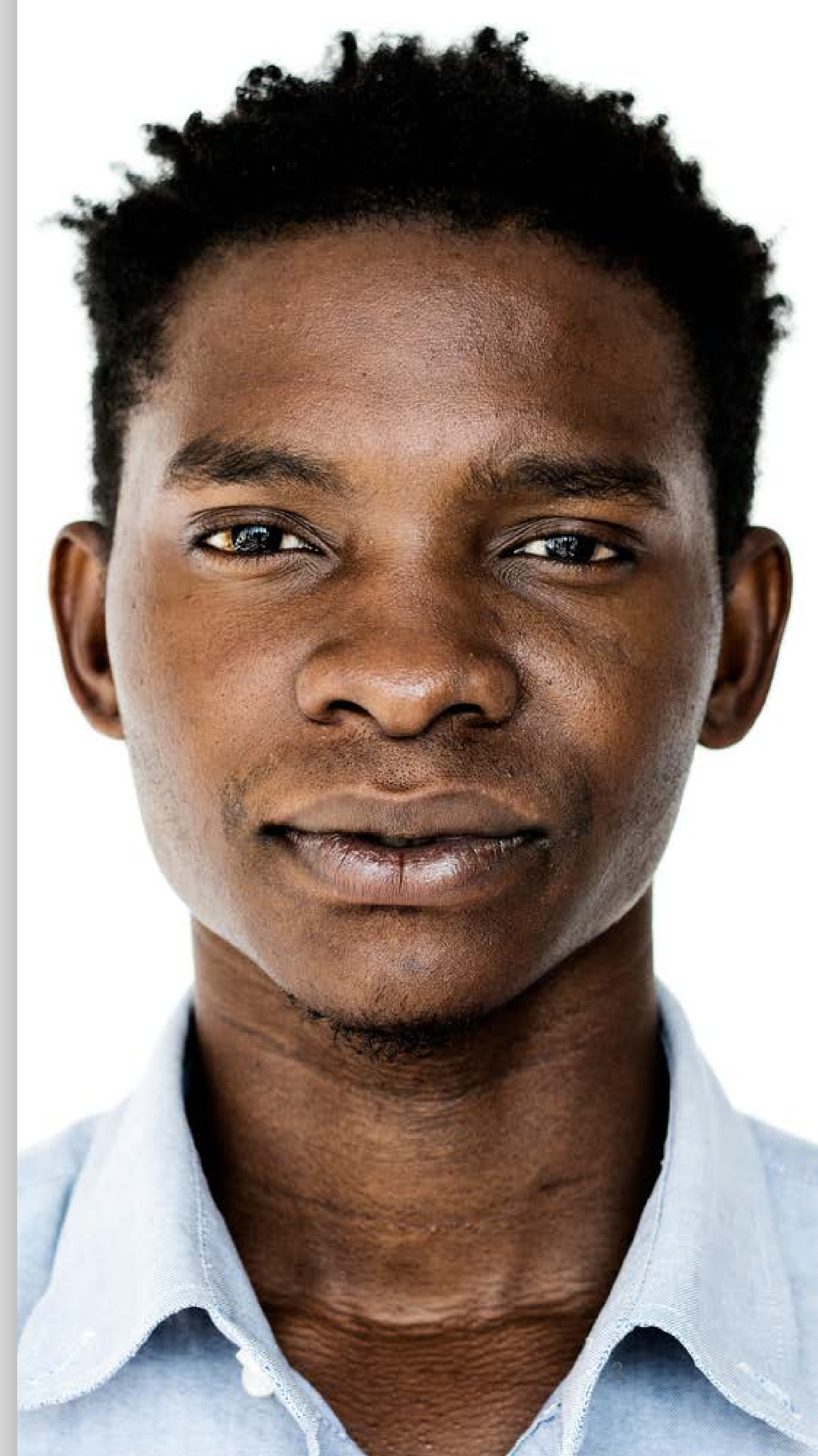
Conclusion

An Opportunity for Truly Transformative Change

George Floyd. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Those are just a few of the people whose names the nation has come to know because they were victims of racial violence in 2020. The killings of these and other Black Americans sparked the largest racial justice protests in the United States since the civil rights movement. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that it was time to examine the ways systemic racism fuels economic inequality and poor public health outcomes for Black people in our country.

Corporations, foundations, and philanthropists responded to that call, committing at least [\\$50 billion](#) to address social injustice and racial inequities. At Jobs for the Future (JFF), as part of our mission to drive equitable economic advancement for all, we redoubled our commitment to achieving racial economic equity, with a particular focus on Black learners and workers. We were excited by the opportunities for truly transformative change that this new outpouring of resources could unlock and eager to identify ways in which we and others across the education and workforce fields could support the organizations taking on this vital work.

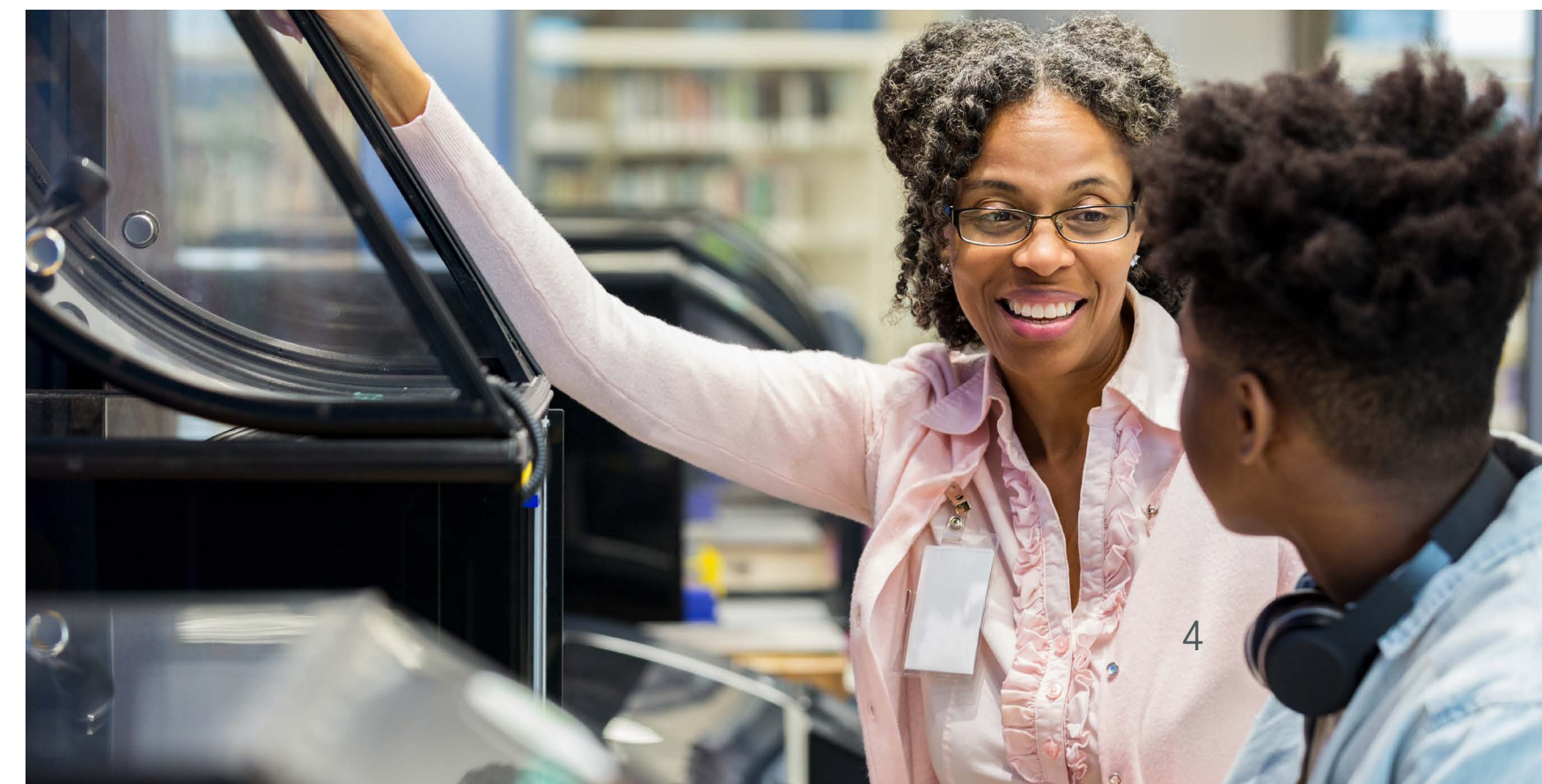
In this market scan, we sought to identify organizations that might now have the



resources to pursue new strategies—or dramatically expand existing ones—to advance racial economic equity. We focused on the two key approaches we recommend in our [Purpose-Built Call to Action: Achieving Black Economic Equity](#): ending occupational segregation and eradicating the racial wealth gap.

We found organizations throughout the learn and work ecosystem that are using a collective \$1.23 billion in post-June 2020 funding to tackle the underlying factors that contribute to systemic racism. Some are building on strong foundations by helping our nation’s historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) and established organizations scale efforts with proven records of success. Others are building new coalitions and launching new initiatives. They include the Center for Black Entrepreneurship, which has a postsecondary academic center focused on training and supporting a new generation of Black entrepreneurs, and OneTen, which is bringing together training providers, employers, and other stakeholders to place 1 million Black workers in high-paying jobs over the next 10 years.

At JFF, we are inspired by this influx of resources and the upsurge in activity. We look forward to working with and supporting these innovators, and we hope to help them connect with one another so they can magnify their impact and drive real change for Black learners and workers.





“To close the racial equity gap, we have to make intentional investments in pathways and supportive infrastructure that are proven to lead to our highest-paying, most secure jobs. Ada has learned firsthand that simply opening doors is not enough—that free is not enough. When both strategic and systemic investments are made, our students not only succeed on par with their peers, but also quickly become community leaders, reinvesting deeply in those who come after them.”

— Lauren Sato, CEO, Ada Developers Academy





Understanding the Landscape

History and Context

Structural racism in the United States dates back to our nation's beginnings and continues to permeate our institutions, economy, and culture. Until the late 20th century, society [systemically excluded](#) Black people from opportunities and investments that allowed white families to advance economically and build wealth. Long-standing biases built into the official and unofficial policies of government programs, banks, the criminal justice system, and other private and public institutions have preserved the [racial wealth gap](#), which has not declined since the late 1940s. Today, Black Americans still face discrimination in education, employment, real estate, criminal justice, and more. The ubiquity of discriminatory practices contributes to the misconception that racism is a permanent fixture of U.S. society and that disparate economic outcomes are inevitable.

Black activists and organizations have refused to accept this idea, fighting throughout U.S. history to dismantle racism. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) has a [long track record](#) of diligent and methodical work against systemic barriers to racial, economic, and social equality, such as voter disenfranchisement, segregation, and employment discrimination. The NAACP's century-long advocacy efforts, along with those of other well-established organizations, such as the Urban League and the Southern Poverty Law Center, have continued into the present.

In recent years, we have seen signs of an evolution in the racial and economic justice advocacy ecosystem, as initiatives such as Black Lives Matter, the Black Youth Project, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, and Color of Change have emerged and gained momentum. Their mandate is to push for structural changes in systems, institutions, and legislative and social policies. Their approach builds upon the successes and challenges of organizations that came before. In addition to addressing individual laws or legal cases, they're pursuing broad-based strategies to eliminate systemic barriers in multiple settings.

The Market Today: A New Wave of Investments

Our goal in this market scan is to identify initiatives to advance racial economic equity that emerging and established entities have launched with the help of money and other resources funders have made available since the killing of George Floyd. We are specifically interested in those that are positioned to drive economic advancement for Black learners and workers for the next five to 20 years.

We started our research by collecting data on public financial pledges and other commitments of resources that corporations and other funders have made since June 2020. We then traced the paths of these investments to identify the organizations that are receiving those funds, with a specific focus on organizations working in JFF's areas of expertise in the education, workforce, and economic development sectors.

We initially found new or renewed public commitments by **more than 260** companies, foundations, and other organizations totaling **nearly \$44 billion** from June 2020 through the spring of 2022. We then closely reviewed more than 110 funders that had made total pledges of \$5 million or more each, aiming, where possible, to identify beneficiaries and understand investment goals.

Seeking specifically to unearth investments and initiatives aligned with JFF's focus on transforming education and workforce systems, we examined pledges of support for Black entrepreneurs, workers, and students, and for HBCUs and other education and workforce programs designed to expand access to opportunities for Black Americans.

The result was a data set that included more than 300 grants, investments, and other pledges of support for efforts to transform education and workforce systems in pursuit of racial economic equity from more than 40 funders. The combined total value of those commitments was about \$1.23 billion.

Our findings probably only scratch the surface of a new wave of investment, but this data provides broad insights into the type of work that's now possible—and offers a hint of the long-term education and economic outcomes this work could deliver.



A look at the announcements of new or expanded investments in racial equity work since June of 2020 **reveals that funders are focusing on the systemic and intersectional nature of racism** and are pouring resources into multiple efforts that take a variety of approaches to advancing racial economic equity. Here's a quick rundown of newly announced initiatives that reveals the wide range of strategies funders are supporting, often simultaneously:

[JPMorgan Chase](#), the [Surdna Foundation](#), and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation ([LISC](#)), a nationwide nonprofit community development financial institution, aim to help close the racial wealth gap through support for programs designed to benefit Black homeowners, Black entrepreneurs, and banks owned by people of color.

[Comcast](#), [Capital One](#), and [Walmart](#) are putting resources into efforts to advance racial economic equity on a number of fronts as they dramatically expand existing initiatives and launch comprehensive new ones. They're supporting strategies that address everything from criminal justice reform, health care,

education, and the digital divide to the need to help the next generation of leaders learn how to craft innovative public policies.

In July 2020, philanthropist MacKenzie Scott [reported](#) that she had donated \$586.7 million to nonprofits that are doing “transformative work” to advance racial equity. Those contributions, which at the time made her the [second-largest funder](#) of organizations focused on racial equity, included [major investments in HBCUs](#) and initiatives serving Black and Indigenous communities, particularly in areas that have been underserved by public and private institutions and where the impact of racial inequality intersects with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledging that change begins at home, U.S. retail giant [Kroger](#) and many other businesses are deepening their efforts to build inclusive workplace cultures and diversify their talent and supplier pipelines.

Segmenting the Market: Foundational Priorities and Outcomes

As we analyzed the landscape of initiatives funded after June 2020, we primarily focused on the ways in which programs align with the two **foundational priorities** of JFF's racial economic equity initiative: **ending occupational segregation** and **eradicating the racial wealth gap**. Notably, commitments related to eliminating the racial wealth gap were concentrated in initiatives undertaken to **invest in Black entrepreneurs**, which is one of five strategies we recommend as ways to achieve our two foundational priorities.

We outline the principle elements of those five strategies below, and then dive deeper and offer more detail about what we're seeing in the following pages.

Foundational Priority: End Occupational Segregation

We believe the most effective ways to end occupational segregation are to engage in efforts based on the following strategies:



ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOR MARKET AND WORKPLACE

- ▶ Identify and address discrimination and bias in hiring practices, compensation and benefits policies, and advancement processes.
- ▶ Expand opportunities for Black workers and learners to build and leverage the [social capital](#), connections, and networks that help people access and navigate the labor market and pursue other economic opportunities.



REIMAGINE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

- ▶ Expand opportunities for Black Americans to acquire high-quality and affordable credentials with labor market value by modernizing education and training programs so that all learners are able to access them easily, efficiently, and affordably.

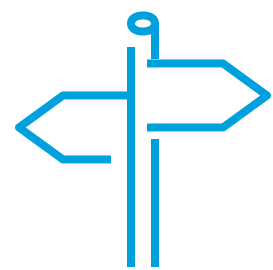
Foundational Priority: Eradicate the Racial Wealth Gap

We believe the most effective ways to eradicate the racial wealth gap are to engage in efforts based on the following strategies:



INVEST IN BLACK ENTREPRENEURS

- ▶ Dismantle barriers erected by structural racism, including lack of access to financial capital, lack of access to credit, and lack of access to business networks and business leadership development opportunities.



ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WORK

- ▶ Strengthen wraparound supports, such as transportation or housing assistance, for Black workers and learners.
- ▶ Expand opportunities for Black Americans to build [professional social capital](#) through mentorship programs and other activities that raise awareness of and exposure to various careers.

- ▶ Enhance career navigation strategies by offering targeted coaching and tools that are specifically designed to help Black learners and workers optimize their prospects for economic advancement.



EXPLORE FINANCIAL INNOVATIONS TO STRENGTHEN BLACK COMMUNITIES

- ▶ Seek innovative ways to expand the financial services ecosystem in order to reduce the number of unbanked Black households, thereby increasing both their ability to protect and grow the assets they have and the likelihood that they will be able to recover from financial hardships when they arise.
- ▶ Expand financial investments in Black communities to decrease the percentage of Black children who grow up in neighborhoods that have been underserved by public and private institutions and systems.

See some of the organizations that are taking innovative approaches to advancing the strategies that are priorities in each of these five market segments on pages 20–24.

Going Deeper: Ending Occupational Segregation

Our research reveals that many funders have earmarked significant amounts of money for efforts to provide Black learners and other students of color with expanded access to education and training programs, activities that help participants build social capital, and wraparound support services. These contributions take the form of direct support for individual learners and investments in initiatives to eliminate systemic racism in education. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Support for organizations like New Leaders, whose mission is to **increase the number of Black principals and superintendents** in U.S. school systems. Currently only about [11 percent](#) of school principals across the country are Black. Increasing the number of Black school administrators could help decrease turnover rates among Black teachers and improve outcomes for Black learners.





- ▶ Funding for **college scholarships** for Black learners, which could expand access to high-value careers by making education more affordable for Black Americans.
- ▶ Investments in **postsecondary academic and workforce development programs**: HBCUs and other institutions and programs received funds to expand access to STEM training and research, potentially increasing future representation of Black workers in science and technology careers.
- ▶ Support for programs designed to **prepare young people to succeed in college**, such as efforts to place full-time directors of college counseling in public schools that currently don't have the resources to provide such services.
- ▶ Investments in initiatives designed to **transform systems across the learn and work ecosystem**—whether by tackling inequitable educational policies at the district level, as School Board Partners seeks to do, addressing the root causes of systemic inequities, which is the Equity Institute's mission, or building and strengthening networks and partnerships dedicated to improving outcomes for Black learners, as Innovation for Equity does.

Going Deeper: Eradicate the Racial Wealth Gap

Our research indicates that fostering a more robust ecosystem for Black entrepreneurs—which we see as one of the primary strategies for eradicating the racial wealth gap—stood out as a top objective across the \$50 billion in funding allocations to individuals and organizations.

For many of the biggest funders, mostly financial institutions, supporting business ownership aligns with their core operational objectives. However, supporting Black entrepreneurs makes good sense as a strategy for advancing racial equity, too. Small businesses are an integral part of the U.S. economy, [contributing to 44 percent](#) of the country's GDP. From 2000 to 2017, small businesses created [8.4 million net new jobs](#). Increasing investments in companies led by Black entrepreneurs will help ensure that the communities in which they do business can benefit from job creation and other economic activity—which can help close the [Black-white wealth gap](#). That, in turn, will boost

the overall U.S. economy—the wealth gap dampens investment and consumption, and could cost the economy \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion (in 2018 dollars) per year by 2028 if it isn't reduced.

However, Black entrepreneurs often struggle because they have been systemically excluded from traditional routes of access to institutional sources of capital, such as loans and equity investments, and, as a result, are forced to use their own savings or borrow from friends and relatives to launch or expand their businesses. Lack of access to capital can threaten a business's long-term viability in the best of times, but it can increase an organization's vulnerability during a crisis. Black businesses and Black communities have had to confront that stark reality during the COVID-19 pandemic, because they've been [disproportionately impacted](#) by the economic fallout precipitated by the health care crisis.

The pandemic didn't dampen the spirit of Black entrepreneurship, but underinvestment in Black businesses persists. After a precipitous [41 percent decline](#) at the start of the pandemic in April 2020, the number of Black business owners had rebounded with a 38 percent increase from February 2020 levels by late 2021—the 100th anniversary of the bombing of Tulsa, Oklahoma's [Black Wall Street](#). In contrast, according to an [analysis](#) of U.S. Census Bureau data, the number of Hispanic business owners rose 15 percent in the same period, while the number of white and Asian entrepreneurs fell by 3 percent and 2 percent, respectively.

However, only [1.2 percent of venture capital](#) went to Black-owned businesses in 2021, even though they raised nearly \$1.8 billion in the first half of that year—a more than fourfold increase over the amount they raised in the same time period the previous year. But investors seemed to be [pulling back in 2022](#) amid troubling financial indicators. And as of 2020, the median [seed round for Black female](#) entrepreneurs was \$125,000 versus the national median of \$2.5 million. In 2021, Babson College researchers studying Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data found that [61 percent of Black women founders](#) draw on their personal resources for 100 percent of their startup capital.



Our research shows that efforts to invest in Black entrepreneurs that were launched or expanded after June 2020 manifest as loans to current and emerging businesses and support for new and innovative approaches to entrepreneurship training and leadership development, such as the [Center for Black Entrepreneurship](#) and the [Apple Entrepreneur Camp for Black Founders](#).

In this scan, we propose a series of high-level **near- and long-term socioeconomic outcomes** that could be used to measure the long-term success, impact, or return on investment of these financial commitments. Here's a breakdown of the outcomes we envision.



Expected Outcomes: Ending Occupational Segregation

Near-term outcomes

- ▶ New well-paying jobs in Black communities
- ▶ New training programs designed for Black learners
- ▶ Increases in the number of Black students entering and completing training programs in which participants learn in-demand skills that prepare them for well-paid jobs in fields that offer opportunities for economic advancement
- ▶ Growth in the number of Black Americans who land new, high-wage jobs
- ▶ Increased availability of wraparound supports that enable individuals to overcome barriers that could prevent them from participating in training or pursuing employment opportunities

Longer-term outcomes

- ▶ Growth in the number of Black Americans in organizational leadership positions
- ▶ A decrease in the unemployment rate for Black workers
- ▶ An increase in wages for Black workers
- ▶ Higher college enrollment and completion rates for Black students
- ▶ Growth in the number of Black students who earn degrees in STEM fields

Expected Outcomes: Eradicating the Racial Wealth Gap

We would expect eradicating the racial wealth gap to yield many of the same near- and longer-term outcomes that ending occupational segregation would generate, but we also anticipate results like these:

Near term outcomes

- ▶ An increase in the number of Black students completing entrepreneurship training
- ▶ Increases in the levels of financing provided to Black-owned businesses—in terms of both dollar amount and the share of overall investments in businesses
- ▶ Growth in the number of Black business owners (who are more likely than other business owners to be [sole proprietors](#)) who have enough capital to expand their staffs—and thereby increase the average number of employees in Black-owned businesses

Longer-term outcomes

- ▶ An increase in the share of U.S. businesses owned by Black Americans
- ▶ Higher profits, increased growth rates, and better overall performance (in terms of metrics such as revenue and employment) for Black-owned businesses
- ▶ Higher levels of Black household wealth and homeownership
- ▶ A decrease in the average amount of student loan debt held by Black Americans

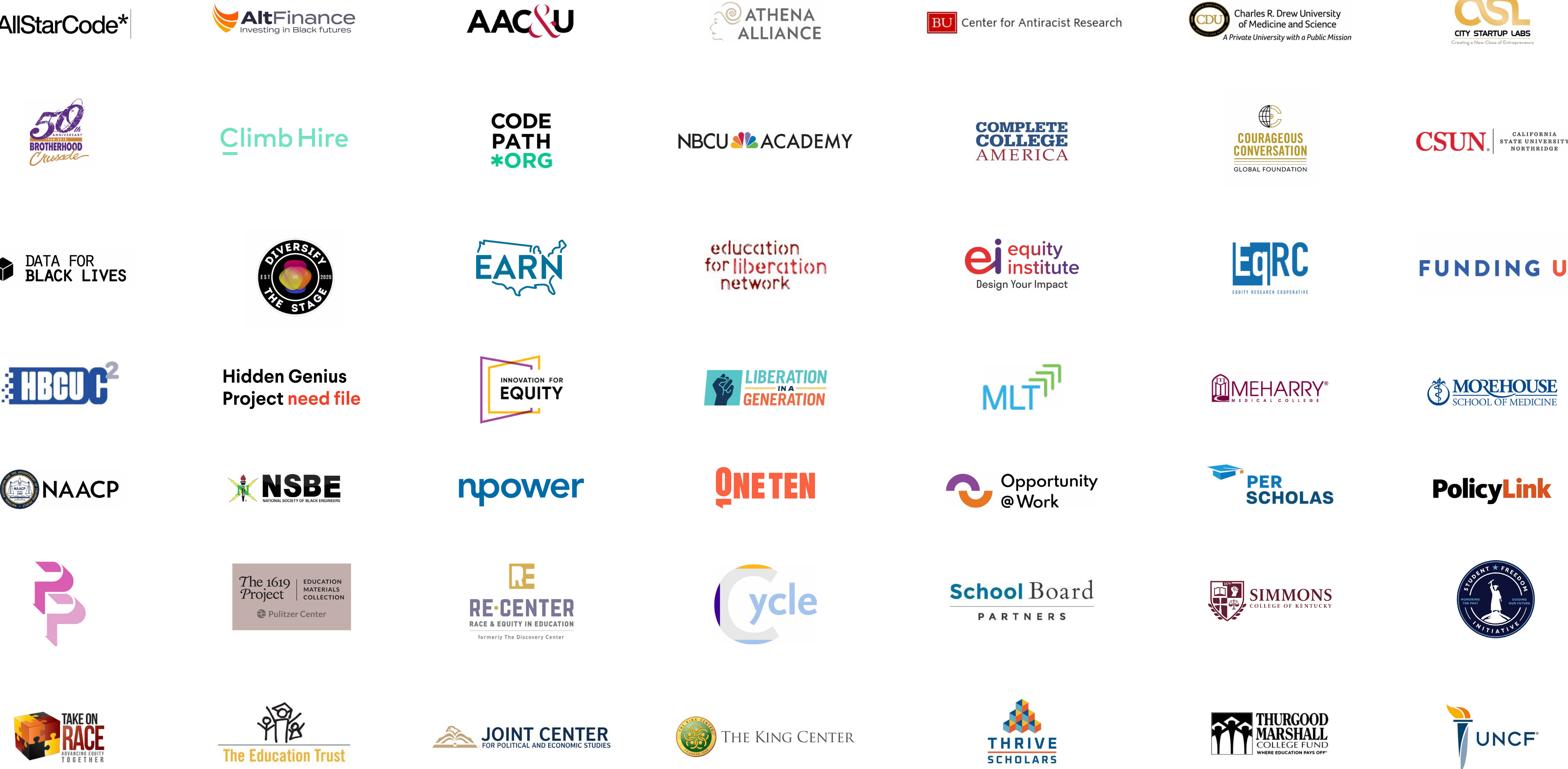




UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace

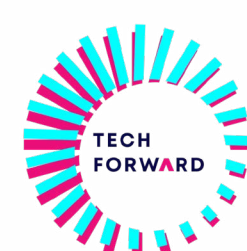
A look at some of the innovators whose programs help reduce discriminatory practices and empower Black workers to more fully participate in the labor market and workplace.





Reimagine Education and Training Systems

A look at some of the innovators that are reimagining education and training systems to make them more equitable and ensure that they offer more opportunities for Black learners and workers.





UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Invest in Black Entrepreneurs

A look at some of the innovators that support and invest in Black-owned businesses and their founders.

AllStarCode*



Center for Black
Entrepreneurship
need file



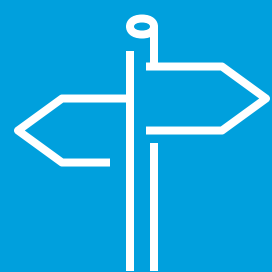
Hidden
Genius Project
need file



nfte!
Network for Teaching
Entrepreneurship

QNETEN





Address the Social Determinants of Work

A look at some of the innovators whose programs provide guidance to Black Americans who are navigating circumstances that may curb their access to work and learning opportunities.





Explore Financial Innovations to Strengthen Black Communities

A look at some of the organizations offering innovative solutions that expand access to the financial services ecosystem to ensure that it more fairly serves Black Americans.



Limitations and Considerations

Our research team combed through a wide range of publicly available sources of information—including databases, press releases, news articles, and company and recipient program websites—to identify financial pledges that could provide increased resources to organizations pursuing efforts to advance economic equity that align with the foundational priorities of our racial economic equity initiative. This approach relied heavily on the transparency of those making pledges and committing resources in other ways, including integrating their commitments into the regular course of their business operations.

For the largest donors, which tended to be financial institutions, these commitments primarily took the form of loans to or equity investments in businesses, individuals, and nonprofits and other organizations serving Black communities. According to a recent [Washington Post report](#), whose findings we saw reflected in our own data, more than 90 percent of the nearly \$50 billion pledged to address racial inequality was allocated to loans and investments,



including mortgages. Information disclosed by some of the donors revealed capital infusions, via equity or debt, for Black- or Latinx-led or -owned institutions, new construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing, and events and training programs to support the growth of businesses led by Black Americans and other people of color.

While those are important and admirable steps, they aren't as easy to track and examine as other forms of investment might be.

What was then left to analyze via public information were those commitments pledged as grants. Here, we kept our analytical focus on initiatives related to areas in which JFF has historically worked, such as education and workforce development, rather than health outcomes, criminal justice, and broader economic development issues. Even for this portion of the funding pie, a lack of transparency can still pose hurdles, regardless of the underlying intentions. We encourage donors to disclose as much information as possible about such gifts, because a lack of information may impede society's legitimate interest

in understanding how these funds are being directed and in holding donors and recipients alike accountable to ensure the investments and the initiatives they're intended to support have meaningful impacts.

Also, perhaps because funders may have an understandable desire to move rapidly when announcing financial commitments, choosing strategies, and conducting due diligence about what types of programs are most effective, we observed that quite a bit of the new financial support went to older, more well-known organizations with tremendous legacies of impact. While we recognize that these organizations have undertaken a significant amount of meaningful work to advance racial and economic equity, we decided to focus on profiling new initiatives that have launched or are expanding considerably through post-June 2020 investments, although some organizations began their work prior to 2020. We chose this approach because we wanted to better understand how the tidal wave of new funding might drive new thinking, new connections, and new work.



Trends and Opportunities

Trends to Watch

Funders are creatively deploying a full suite of resources.

We're seeing funders commit to this work in many ways, sharing human capital and other valuable resources as well as financial capital. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Joining a movement spearheaded by a Black creative director in Brooklyn, **Sephora** is taking on a pledge to devote [15 percent of the shelf space](#) in its U.S. stores to Black-owned brands and is creating an advisory group that includes brand leaders of color to facilitate the process.
- ▶ **Salesforce** pledged 1 million employee volunteer hours on top of its financial commitments of \$100 million to Black-owned businesses and \$100 million to founders from populations that are underrepresented in business over the next five years.
- ▶ Many funders are enhancing their financial commitments by matching employee donations. For example, **Bain Capital** is [matching](#) up to \$1 million in employee donations to efforts to advance racial equity in addition to committing \$100 million over the next 10 years to nonprofit organizations focused on social justice.
- ▶ **Uber** committed [\\$25 million](#) to the [MDI Keeper's Fund](#), a private investment fund sponsored by the National Bankers Association that supports organizations known as [Minority Depository Institutions](#) (MDI), financial institutions in which the majority of the board seats or company stock is held by individuals from populations that have been systemically disadvantaged socially and/or economically. Uber also allocated \$25 million in unrestricted cash via deposits to MDIs.
- ▶ **Twitter** [committed premium ad space](#), including \$1 million to amplify the educational work of the National Museum of African American History and Culture—and a collective total of \$270,000 to a group of other organizations using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag.

HBCUs are at the vanguard. HBCUs, despite decades of government disinvestment, have helped catalyze advances in Black communities for more than 100 years. According to one [study](#), the number of startups led by Black women with undergraduate degrees from Howard University exceeds the number of startups led by Black women with undergraduate degrees from Harvard University.

HBCUs received significant investments after June 2020, including [transformative gifts](#) from philanthropist Mackenzie Scott and corporate investments in new academic programs. We believe funders donate to HBCUs because they want to work with established partners that have proven track records. We hope funders continue to invest in HBCUs and other long-standing champions of racial equity. But we'd also like to see them open up their giving to more than a few high-profile institutions, and also do more to support the [more than 90 percent of Black college students](#) enrolled at other schools.



Hometown organizations are attracting attention. We also noticed that funders are giving to local organizations, probably because they want to connect with partners that serve their communities. For example, the [Amgen Foundation](#) has directed its giving to organizations in areas where Amgen has a significant presence.

This strategy can create opportunities to broaden the impact of promising local programs. One way to do that would be to form “alumni” networks of program beneficiaries, particularly individuals who took part in leadership training, so they can come together and collaborate on bigger initiatives.

Networks and coalitions with the potential for nationwide impact are also benefiting from new investments. In the education sector, examples include initiatives that are designed to benefit learners at multiple postsecondary institutions, such as the [Student Freedom Initiative](#) and [HBCU C² at Tennessee State University](#), a program that empowers all HBCUs to bring coding and creativity (C²) programs to their campuses and communities.

And in the the workforce system, funders are embracing programs like NPower’s Command Shift coalition, a national consortium that promotes the advancement of young women of color in tech careers, and OneTen, which is currently working with employers and talent developers in 10 markets to train 1 million Black learners without bachelor’s degrees and place them in jobs that offer economic advancement opportunities.



Opportunities for Future Innovation and Investment

Programs that seek to increase investments in Black business owners and emphasize expanding the share of those investments that comes in the form of equity capital. Such efforts can help build stability and wealth in Black communities. Because Black-owned businesses are more likely to be located in and hire residents of Black communities, investments in Black-owned businesses create opportunities for Black workers to get jobs close to home, which increases the likelihood that the dollars they earn will be reinvested in the form of increased sales for local businesses and increased tax revenue. The long-term impacts can include an increase in the number of good jobs, improvements in housing and public schools, increases in educational achievement and median income, and, ultimately, reductions in the racial wealth gap.

Robust collection and analysis of data related to the outcomes of investments. High-quality, regularly updated data enables stakeholders involved in efforts to advance





racial economic equity to identify opportunities to strengthen impact. We also see value in gathering and sharing feedback from the people and organizations that benefit from investments. Their accounts of what works and what doesn't can drive improvements in new program development and approaches that may be scalable. They may also enhance the connection between funders, recipient organizations, and the communities they serve.

Initiatives that focus on long-term outcomes. Stakeholders will be more likely to develop lasting holistic solutions if they take the long view of success. For example, a long-term outlook will help ensure that an effort to end occupational segregation includes not only immediate education and training opportunities for participants but also services to help them find jobs and advance in their careers. Long-term thinking may also spur employers to improve their work cultures through diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Many of the innovators we feature in this scan are developing comprehensive models such as these.

Funding strategies that ensure that recipient organizations are prepared—and have the support they need to take full advantage of their newly available resources. While funders might want to make a big impact right away, it may be more advantageous in the long run to give the recipients time to organize their resources and prepare budgets that incorporate the

new funding. We recommend that funders ensure that their offers include support for general operating activities and professional development for the employees of funded organizations, and include provisions that give recipients the capacity to plan for and address or avoid potential funding cliffs.

Investments in structural changes to maintain a focus on racial economic equity despite ebbs and flows in public attention.

Dismantling systemic racism requires extensive forethought and planning, and sustainable wins won't materialize through a one-time wave of philanthropy alone, especially if long-standing policies and frameworks go unaddressed.

For instance, while expanded access to capital through efforts to finance more Black-owned businesses can increase generational wealth and community prosperity, traditional financing requirements such as credit scores might perpetuate racial inequities long baked into the system. A more equitable approach to lending might explore [alternative credit evaluation methods](#) that take factors such as patterns of rent and utilities payments into account.





Innovators to Watch



Innovators to Watch

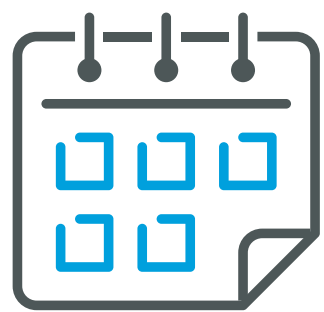
Organizations Poised for Scaled Impact

JFF Labs Innovators to Watch are a select group of organizations that are at the leading edge of market trends and distinguish themselves from other forward-looking companies by their potential to create significant business-aligned social impact. Each offers a potentially transformative innovation or is led by inspiring founders and teams that we believe in.

In selecting this group of 10 Innovators to Watch, we looked for the following:

- ▶ Scalability and likely impact
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Approach to collective impact, including internal commitments to advancing racial equity and amplifying the voices of Black learners and workers
- ▶ Network engagement, or potential for alignment with future networks
- ▶ Agility and a future-focused mindset

Eight Characteristics of the Innovators to Watch



Year Founded

Eight out of 10 were founded in the past five years.



Location

They're located all over the country—from Cupertino, California, to Atlanta, Boston, New Orleans, New York City, and Providence, Rhode Island.



Scale

The majority (eight) of the organizations are operating nationwide, while one is networked (with operations in multiple geographic areas) and one is local.



Status

Five organizations are strategically sustaining established initiatives, four are launching new initiatives, and one is scaling an existing initiative.



Leadership

Nine of the 10 organizations were founded or are currently led by a person of color.



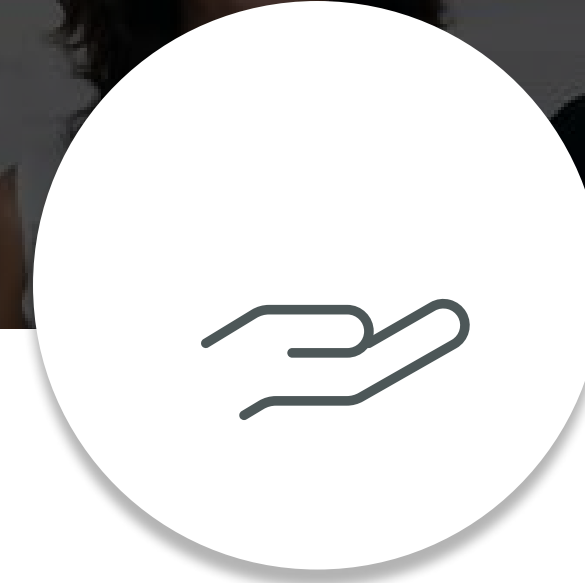
Strategic Focus on Racial Economic Equity

These organizations serve members of populations that have been underserved by public and private systems and institutions. Participants in their programs include Black educators, Black entrepreneurs, and Black learners. These organizations have adopted strategies focused on reimagining and transforming education and training systems, eliminating discrimination in the workplace, and investing in Black entrepreneurs.



Sectors

They are pursuing initiatives across a wide range of sectors throughout the learn and work ecosystem, which we break down into the following segments: Awareness, Exposure, Exploration; Advancement; Postsecondary or Learning & Training; Entry; Policy & Advocacy; and Intrapreneurial & Entrepreneurial Advancement. (You can find more detailed information about our analysis of this landscape in our [Purpose-Built to Advance Equity](#) market scan.)



Leading Funders

Funders that have invested in these innovators since June 2020 include Apple, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Citigroup, Cognizant, Comcast NBCUniversal, Goldman Sachs, Mastercard, Nike, and many more.



developer.apple.com/entrepreneur-camp

Founded in 2019
Cupertino, California



OVERVIEW

Priority: Invest in Black entrepreneurs
Sector: Advancement
Scale: National
Status: New
Populations of Focus: Women of all backgrounds and Black and Latinx individuals who are interested in becoming tech entrepreneurs and software developers

MEASURE OF IMPACT

12
cohorts of participants
135
companies represented
27
countries represented

SEGMENTS

-  Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace
-  Reimagine Education and Training Systems

Program Overview

Apple launched the Apple Entrepreneur Camp, a program that teaches application development skills with guidance from Apple experts, in 2019. Then in 2021, the company incorporated the camp into its Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI), which it launched in June 2020 to address systemic racism and expand business and career opportunities for Black Americans and other people of color. REJI focuses on three main areas: education, economic empowerment, and criminal justice reform.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Apple has expanded the Entrepreneur Camp’s mission to include support for aspiring tech professionals and entrepreneurs from communities that are underserved by public and private systems and institutions. It now offers an Entrepreneur Camp for Black Founders and an Entrepreneur Camp for Hispanic/Latinx Founders. Participants receive a year of support from an Apple developer during and after the program, and they become part of a network of fellow program alumni. And now they have access to mentorship opportunities and expert business and financial advice through Apple’s new partnership with Harlem Capital, a venture capital firm that invests in early-stage companies led by people of color and women of all backgrounds.

Looking Ahead

Apple is expanding the Entrepreneur Camp to six annual cohorts engaging three populations: Black businesspeople, Hispanic/Latinx businesspeople, and women entrepreneurs of all backgrounds. It is also creating a community of support for Black entrepreneurs to connect with one another during the program and across cohorts. In addition to the Entrepreneur Camp, Apple offers free courses, certifications, and office hours for aspiring developers and others interested in learning about coding and application development.

Highlighting Apple as a Model for Innovation

Apple is building a community that helps Black tech professionals and company founders succeed by offering access to learning opportunities, expert advice, and other resources. The company’s goals include helping entrepreneurs gain recognition in the field and build the skills and expertise they need to confidently pitch product ideas and business plans.

OVERVIEW

Priorities: Reimagine education and training systems, invest in Black entrepreneurs

Sectors: Awareness, Exposure, Exploration (K-12)

Scale: National

Status: Established

Population of Focus: Young men of color in high school

MEASURES OF IMPACT

1,000+

students served

96%

felt more confident about pursuing computer science after completing the Summer Intensive Program

85%

of participants reported that they are more likely to pursue tech education or employment opportunities after completing the Summer Intensive Program

SEGMENTS



Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace



Reimagine Education and Training Systems



Invest in Black Entrepreneurs

Program Overview

All Star Code, a nonprofit committed to providing young men of color with tools and skills that can help them develop financial independence and advance socio-economically, offers a free six-week course called the Summer Intensive Program, which is designed to help participants develop an entrepreneurial mindset and build technological skills. Students get hands-on experience in HTML, JavaScript, and CSS and then present a product in the form of an app or technology that addresses a social issue. Graduates are placed into a six-year cohort through which they have access to continuing education opportunities, college access support, coaching, and career guidance.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

All Star Code has an ambitious plan for using the funding it has received to scale its programs, which are creating a pipeline of tech talent made up of young men of color. In the summer of 2022, it expanded to Chicago, Dallas, and Houston. Having pivoted during the COVID-19 pandemic to remote instruction from a primarily in-person model, All Star Code is now making an effort to reach a geographically diverse pool of participants through a mix of modalities, including virtual and hybrid instructional models and gamified lessons.

Looking Ahead

All Star Code plans to serve 100,000 students in the next 10 years and expand by developing new after-school programs and clubs. It also plans to forge partnerships to create new continuing education opportunities that help young men of color gain additional exposure to careers in tech through its Tech Entrepreneurship Incubator and Teaching Fellows Leadership Program.

Highlighting All Star Code as a Model for Innovation

While numerous organizations and initiatives focus on helping women prepare for technology careers, All Star Code saw a need to support the needs of Black and Latinx males in technology. It provides students with technical resources such as laptops and wireless hotspots and also gives them access to personalized career guidance provided by volunteers associated with its corporate partners. Students who complete All Star Code programs build tech expertise, leadership skills, and professional social capital.



foundation.blackeconomicalliance.org/cbe

Founded in 2021
Atlanta, Georgia (Spelman College and
Morehouse College)



OVERVIEW

Priority: Invest in Black entrepreneurs
Sector: Advancement
Scale: Local
Status: New
Population of Focus: Black students

MEASURES OF IMPACT

2,100+
students served
236
small businesses served
~500
new jobs created
\$50M+
in grants and contracts secured

SEGMENTS

-  Reimagine Education
and Training Systems
-  Invest in Black
Entrepreneurs

Program Overview

The Center for Black Entrepreneurship (CBE) was developed in partnership with Morehouse, Spelman, and the Black Economic Alliance Foundation to become the first academic center to train, support, and establish a cohort of Black entrepreneurs.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Funding enabled Morehouse and Spelman to build upon their strong foundations in entrepreneurship curriculum and establish the CBE. The center provides a cross-listed interdisciplinary minor in entrepreneurship for students at Morehouse and Spelman and an online certificate program. Students are paired with entrepreneurs in the community and can receive pre-seed funding to develop a business.

Looking Ahead

The first cohort, approximately 30 students, began instruction in the fall of 2022. The CBE plans to expand its curriculum and share it with other institutions, thereby expanding Black entrepreneurship opportunities to more students. The CBE also plans to develop a holistic program by establishing partnerships with other Atlanta-based higher education programs, the HBCU community, and other national models for entrepreneurship.

Highlighting the CBE as a Model for Innovation

The CBE is expanding on the efforts of the Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center, which has been a successful global model for entrepreneurship since 2008 and has developed strong relationships with entrepreneurs and businesses in the local community through advice, mentorship, and funding. Black first-generation college students traditionally have limited exposure to entrepreneurship training and limited access to the funding necessary to start a business. And they often carry responsibilities that inhibit their confidence to take on the risks required in entrepreneurship. The CBE provides students with exposure to the fundamentals of entrepreneurship early in their careers and expands resources to Black learners. It helps Black learners gain confidence and gives them potential access to pre-seed funding through pitch competitions and partners or investors. Giving young learners the opportunity to create businesses that can contribute to economic growth in Black communities can help reduce the Black-white wealth gap.



theequityinstitute.org

Founded in 2019
Providence, Rhode Island



OVERVIEW

Priorities: Reimagine education and training systems, eliminate discrimination in the labor market and workplace
Sectors: Policy & Advocacy, Advancement
Scale: National
Status: Established
Population of Focus: Education professionals who are Black, Indigenous, or Latinx, or who work in school districts that serve people in these populations

MEASURE OF IMPACT

More than 11,000
educators and leaders who collectively serve more than 24,000 students participated in Equity Institute diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and anti-racism training.

SEGMENTS

-  Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace
-  Reimagine Education and Training Systems

Program Overview

The Equity Institute helps schools, organizations, and communities develop and implement anti-racist strategies. It also researches practical approaches to promoting anti-racist policies and practices in the education system, and builds coalitions of teachers, administrators, professionals, and community members. The Equity Institute leads districts through a root-cause equity analysis to assess their DEI policies through a community-centered approach. It facilitates feedback sessions with districts to develop policy recommendations, training, and strategic actions.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

With College Unbound, the Equity Institute created the Educator Pathway Program, offering Black, Latinx, and Indigenous educators a pathway to a college degree and teaching credential within three years. This program offers evening classes and counts work experience as credits toward degrees. College Unbound advises learners on their progress and helps them identify opportunities to apply learning through implementing best practices in their classrooms. The Equity Institute focuses on equity and racial justice within the curriculum and provides wraparound career supports, including resume building, networking, and job placement services.

Looking Ahead

With its root-cause equity analysis approach, the Equity Institute recognized that many seemingly disparate communities deal with similar challenges in regard to racial economic equity. Stakeholders in these communities often need support and encouragement to speak out and thus raise awareness that catalyzes strategy development and policy design. The Equity Institute plans to scale this work by providing consulting services to engage with stakeholders and train them on best practices for racial economic equity in the school system.

Highlighting Equity Institute as a Model for Innovation

Equity Institute initiatives are tackling the Black-white wealth gap by creating pathways to advancement for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people. It has recognized the need to upskill educators and help them develop strategies that support the success of students who are members of populations that have faced barriers to access in education. Its work supports the development of a new generation of education leaders, with the goal of diversifying the faculties of school districts and improving student outcomes.



innovationequity.org

Founded in 2018
Boston, Massachusetts



OVERVIEW

Priority: Reimagine education and training systems, eliminate discrimination in the labor market and workplace
Sector: Advancement
Scale: National
Status: Established
Population of Focus: Black learners and workers of all ages

MEASURES OF IMPACT

60%
of leaders were promoted into top executive positions within 18 months of starting the program
775,000+
Black and Latinx learners directly affected by the work of a 2019 IFE fellow
6M
Black and Latinx learners indirectly affected by the work of a 2019 IFE fellow
~1,000
participants in IFE Summits and events

SEGMENTS

-  Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace
-  Reimagine Education and Training Systems

Program Overview

Innovation for Equity is a network of education leaders dedicated to improving outcomes for Black learners of all ages. It focuses on increasing the number of Black leaders in education and scaling successful innovations that improve life outcomes for Black learners. IFE’s cornerstone initiatives include the Senior Leaders Fellowship program, summits that convene Black leaders in education, research and publications, and awards presented by IFE that highlight accomplishments of Black education leaders.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Recent funding has enabled IFE to further scale its fellowship program, providing training and support to Black leaders from the entire education ecosystem, including the public, private, social, and philanthropic sectors. The program design is based on a “person, role, and systems” framework that enables participants to understand their strengths, clearly identify their roles as Black leaders in their organizations, and devise strategies that enable them to maximize their impact through their work. Participants have influenced millions of learners.

Looking Ahead

IFE is completing a strategic planning process to develop a road map for its future that will include undertaking new research agendas and identifying ways to expand and deepen its fellowship program. IFE aims to share its findings to spur collective action toward creating advancement pathways for Black education leaders and championing educational system reform that would eliminate inequities that create barriers for Black learners.

Highlighting Innovation for Equity as a Model for Innovation

IFE is strengthening the education ecosystem, tackling traditional inequities for Black learners, and collaborating with leaders from government, nonprofits, corporations, and venture capital firms to promote policy change and make more resources available. It is committed to raising awareness among policymakers and the public about the biases within these systems. These sectors are too often siloed, and IFE has focused on promoting cross-sector dialogue by designing programs that foster collaboration.



newleaders.org

Founded in 2001

New York, New York

OVERVIEW

Priority: Reimagine education and training systems, address social determinants of work

Sector: Advancement

Scale: National

Status: Established

Population of Focus: K-12 principals

MEASURES OF IMPACT

8,000+

education leaders trained

850

schools led by New Leaders principals

2M+

students impacted with 87% of them students of color

Two-thirds

share of participants in New Leaders training programs who are people of color

SEGMENTS



**Reimagine Education
and Training Systems**



**Address the Social
Determinants of Work**

Program Overview

New Leaders provides professional development programs for school principals and district leaders in communities that are underserved by public and private systems and institutions. The curriculum it offers through fellowships, coaching, and workshops is equity-focused, building capacity for systems change. Its Aspiring Principals residency program, the first equity-focused principal-preparation program in the United States, focuses on preparing future principals and improving education outcomes, including staff retention and student achievement, with a focus on students from populations that have faced socio-economic barriers in accessing education.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Recent funding enabled New Leaders to scale up its program and strengthen its focus on social justice and racial equity by developing the National Aspiring Principals Fellowship in partnership with Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University. The fellowship is a principal-preparation program, with 14 months of online coursework followed by a yearlong residency in a school. Fellows receive an administrative credential and the opportunity to earn a master’s degree from Clark Atlanta University.

Looking Ahead

New Leaders plans to expand its fellowship and explore innovative funding strategies to make the program accessible to more districts. It plans to work with state leaders to identify philanthropic partners who can help fund training for district leaders. New Leaders is enhancing its fellowship curriculum, centralizing its focus on racial equity, and prioritizing the experience of leaders of color by, among other things, committing to efforts to address challenges of promoting equity in schools.

Highlighting New Leaders as a Model for Innovation

New Leaders works with stakeholders and practitioners to improve equity in education systems by addressing discriminatory policies and training leaders in equitable practices. New Leaders joined the One Million Teachers of Color campaign to deepen its investment in supporting the professional development of teachers of color and to enhance racial and ethnic diversity in the teaching profession by increasing the number of education leaders of color to 30,000 by 2030. New Leaders has developed a sustainable approach to ensure that individuals get the support they need to become principals who drive lasting change.



npower.org/commandshift

Founded in 2021

Brooklyn, New York

OVERVIEW

Priority: Eliminate discrimination in the labor market and workplace, address social determinants of work

Sector: Postsecondary or Learning & Training

Scale: National

Status: Established

Population of Focus: Women of color

MEASURES OF IMPACT

530+

women served through NPower's training program

61%

increase in women participants in NPower spring classes from 2021 to 2022

28

coalition members (including corporate, nonprofit, and community leaders and women of color alumni from NPower's tech training program)

SEGMENT



Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace

Program Overview

NPower Command Shift is a coalition of corporate, nonprofit, and community leaders committed to accelerating the hiring of women of color in technology jobs, with the goal of increasing their representation in the tech sector from 5 percent to 10 percent in the next 10 years. Command Shift focuses on creating a seismic shift in how companies hire, train, and support women of color as they pursue careers in tech.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Command Shift has invested in research to understand the tech talent pipeline. It's also developing an employer toolkit and providing a platform for women of color and employers to share their stories and examples of success. In partnership with Lightcast, it published a report, "Equation for Equality," that tallied 2.5 million women of color who have in-demand skills but aren't working in the tech industry.

Looking Ahead

The employer toolkit that Command Shift is developing includes actionable tools such as strategies companies can implement to shift culture and training and create a better environment for women of color. Command Shift will pilot the toolkit with a group of employers, who will recruit and train women of color from a wide variety of backgrounds and industries and then share their experiences in their organizations.

Highlighting Command Shift as a Model for Innovation

Command Shift's holistic approach to developing partnerships that focus on the tech talent pipeline involves working with organizations that support women at every stage of life after elementary school. While nonprofit partners, including Girls Who Code and Knowledge House, work directly with women interested in tech and support their pathways to success, NPower focuses on elevating and amplifying the impact of women of color within the industry. In 2020, NPower championed a statewide proclamation for Women of Color in Tech Day in New York State. Since then, the day has been recognized by states in all eight of NPower's regions and now the organization is working to have it proclaimed in every state.



oneten.org

Founded in 2020

No central office

OVERVIEW

Priority: Eliminate discrimination in the labor market and workplace, address social determinants of work

Sectors: Policy & Advocacy, Advancement

Scale: Networked

Status: New

Population of Focus: Black individuals without a four-year degree

MEASURES OF IMPACT

50+
member companies

50
talent developers on board

40,000
hires and promotions to date

SEGMENTS

 **Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace**

 **Reimagine Education and Training Systems**

 **Invest in Black Entrepreneurs**

Program Overview

OneTen is a coalition of talent developers and employers focused on providing resources to upskill, hire, and advance 1 million Black individuals who don’t have a four-year degree into family-sustaining jobs by 2030.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

OneTen has prioritized developing relationships with employers who are committed to a skills-first approach to talent acquisition and hiring. It guides employer partners in identifying jobs that don’t require a four-year degree but do provide a family-sustaining income, which are then placed on OneTen’s Marketplace platform. From there, more than 100 talent developers recruit Black learners and provide them with wraparound supports, including access to mentorship, mental health, resume building, child care, and transportation services. OneTen has created communities of practice that provide value to employers, including training and working groups through which executives (CEOs, chief HR officers, and operations leads) can learn about best practices for retaining and promoting Black talent.

Looking Ahead

OneTen plans to expand in the coming year from 10 markets to 15. It also intends to increase partnerships by working with community colleges to refer Black learners to OneTen’s talent developers. It plans to create a community of practice and work with its coalition employer partners to provide paid apprenticeship opportunities for Black learners to gain experience and increase their likelihood of landing a full-time job with a family-sustaining wage.

Highlighting OneTen as a Model for Innovation

OneTen bridges the gap between Black learners without a four-year degree and employers, facilitating relationships and often matching individuals to opportunities aligned with their skills. It works closely with employer partners to review hiring practices, uncover biases, and educate and support its partners in efforts to implement practices that eliminate barriers to economic opportunities for Black workers and learners. OneTen asks all coalition partners to complete and share the results of a DEI survey that can then help partners assess their approaches, examine policies, and transform their organizations.



rebootrepresentation.org

Founded in 2018
New York, New York

OVERVIEW

Priority: Eliminate discrimination in the labor market and workplace, address social determinants of work, reimagine education and training systems

Sector: Postsecondary or Learning & Training

Scale: National

Status: Scaling

Population of Focus: Black, Latinx, and Native American women

MEASURES OF IMPACT

25

technology companies are represented in the coalition

Reboot Representation is a member of [JFF's Racial Economic Equity advisory council](#)

SEGMENTS



Reimagine Education and Training Systems



Address the Social Determinants of Work

Program Overview

Reboot Representation is a coalition of 25 technology companies focused on doubling the number of Black, Latinx, and Native American women receiving computing degrees by 2025. It issues grants to initiatives that focus on recruiting women into tech careers and helping them stay on tech pathways. It works closely with organizations through its grant-making process, helping recruit participants and connecting them with other mission-aligned partners.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

Reboot Representation developed a mentoring program to provide additional support for learners who participate in its programs. It matches learners with mentors who are Black, Latinx, or Native American women, primarily from tech companies within the coalition. Reboot Representation gathered insights from leading tech companies to understand how they address gender and racial diversity, and it then identified strategies to create pathways for women of color in tech. Its Rebooting Representation report on helping women of color thrive in the tech sector cites eight building blocks, including creating a sense of belonging, building confidence, and providing access.

Looking Ahead

Reboot Representation funds programs that have implemented strategies aligned with its framework and provides strategies and toolkits to support the sponsoring organizations. It plans to expand its mentoring programs and develop partnerships with recruiting practitioners—an effort that will include creating an advisory board of tech recruiters to coach learners on how to prepare for tech job interviews.

Highlighting Reboot Representation as a Model for Innovation

Reboot Representation has been strategic in tracking its cohorts to help women achieve their goals of entering the workforce. It partners with organizations aligned with its strategy of supporting Black, Latinx, and Native American women in progressing along their career trajectories, from high school to college to careers.

School Board

PARTNERS

schoolboardpartners.org

Founded in 2019
New Orleans, Louisiana

OVERVIEW

Priority: Reimagine education and training systems
Sectors: Entry/Workforce, Policy & Advocacy, Advancement
Scale: National
Status: New
Population of Focus: School boards

MEASURES OF IMPACT


94+
school board members from 64 cities trained over the past four years


~5M
students impacted

34
anti-racist policies written and/or passed with its help

30
fellows trained to be president or vice president of a school board

SEGMENTS

- 

Eliminate Discrimination in the Labor Market and Workplace
- 

Address the Social Determinants of Work

Program Overview

School Board Partners trains and supports elected leaders in school districts that have been historically underserved by public and private systems and institutions to lead effective anti-racist school boards. It helps those leaders develop the skills and knowledge needed to recruit, hire, and manage superintendents and develop anti-racist policies for their districts. It also offers toolkits and supports district leaders through fellowships and conferences.

Impact of Funding on Advancing Outcomes

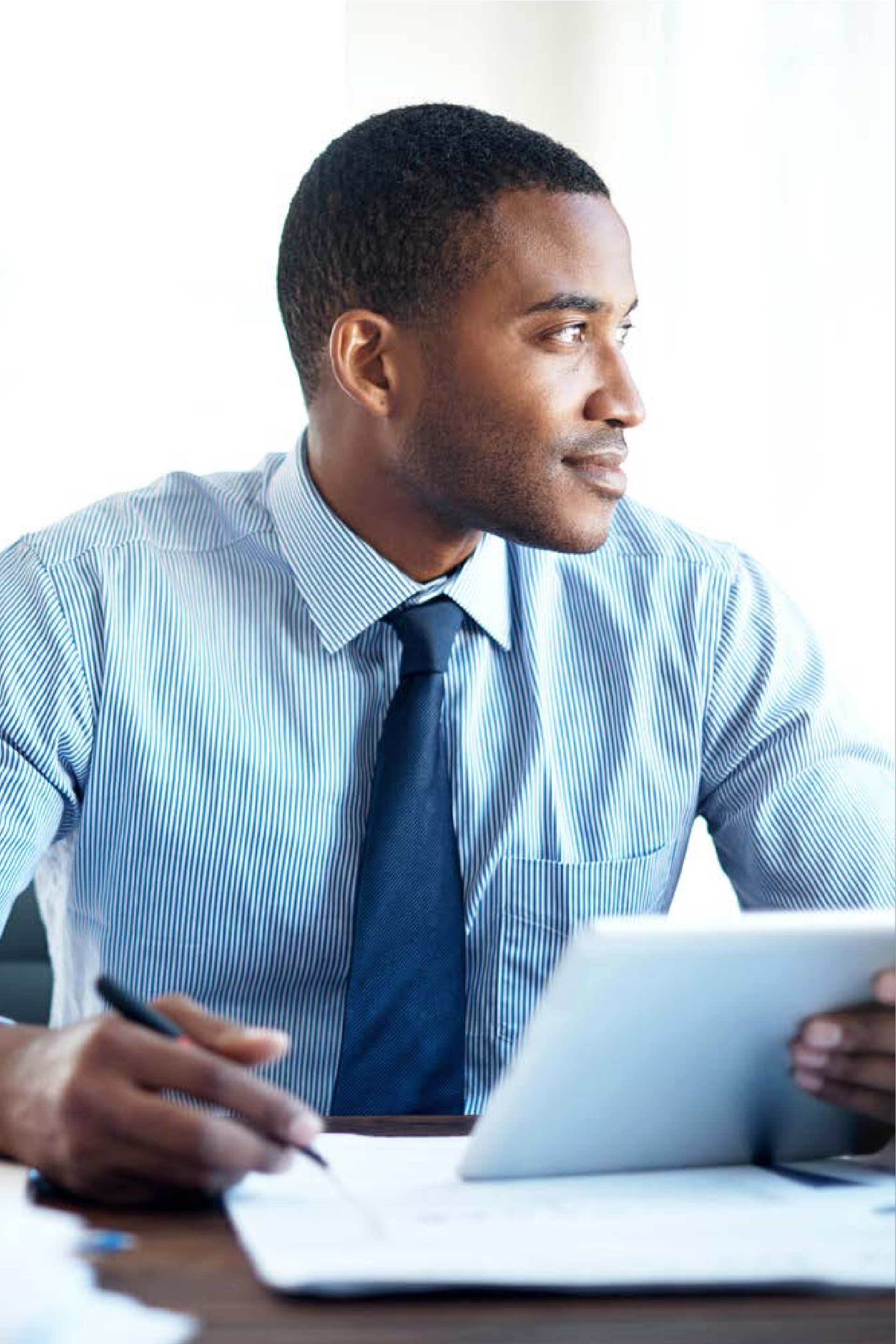
Recent funding has enabled School Board Partners to expand its fellowship program. It plans to impact 2,500 schools over the next decade by supporting school board members committed to achieving educational equity in their districts. Its two-year fellowships include 32 modules focused on six key areas, including anti-racist policymaking, governance, community engagement, budget management, and communication. Fellows receive one-on-one mentorship during and after the program, as well as the services of a fellow who can help draft policies for their districts. School Board Partners has helped leaders from across the country pass more than 90 policies.

Looking Ahead

School Board Partners has made a 10-year commitment to racial equity and is going through a strategic planning process focused on exploring new initiatives to impact 15 million students by 2024. It plans to expand the support for its fellows and alumni and provide training for a broader group of leaders outside the fellowship program.

Highlighting School Boards as a Model for Innovation

In public school systems, school boards often don’t reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve. In many of these cases, superintendents have limited experience leading schools in communities of color and little knowledge of making school policy decisions that emphasize anti-racism and equity. School Board Partners’ innovative model has helped address racial disparities in school systems by educating school boards about ways to recruit, train, and support superintendents who reflect the demographics of the communities they serve. It also offers board members guidance on how to get reelected and craft policies that have long-lasting impact.



CONCLUSION

It's Time to Work Together to Build a More Equitable Future



Michael Collins
Vice President, JFF

The wave of investments in racial equity initiatives that poured in following the killing of George Floyd has laid the foundation for a new era of collaboration among stakeholders willing to make long-term commitments to eradicating racial disparities in U.S. society.

The collection of newly available resources is substantial—foundations, philanthropists, and corporations have made an estimated [\\$50 billion](#) in commitments since June 2020. But even with that kind of financial backing, overcoming a challenge created by centuries of structural disadvantage will require more than a fleeting surge of activism and advocacy.

CONCLUSION

Black Americans have achieved major political and economic gains over the past 60 years, but racism, even if inadvertent, remains present in systems, policies, and behaviors. It reveals itself in the form of biased and discriminatory employment, housing, immigration, law enforcement, and incarceration policies, and in disparities in health outcomes—which have been starkly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these factors have played—and continue to play—a role in creating and preserving the [racial wealth gap](#).

Clearly, doing away with racism isn't something that can be accomplished in a couple of years. Stakeholders need to come together and collaborate on sustained, long-term efforts to bring about structural change.

At Jobs for the Future, we realize that efforts to advance racial equity are underway in many areas, including housing and civil rights, and we look forward to learning from this work. But in this market scan, we aimed to present a bird's eye view of the ways in which funders are channeling resources to innovative initiatives aligned with JFF's mission of transforming education and workforce systems.

This scan shows how the initial influx of resources has enabled a number of organizations to expand their capacity to build and scale high-quality education, training, and employment programs that create advancement opportunities for Black Americans.



One of the most inspiring developments we found is that changemakers throughout the learn and work ecosystem are using the new resources to intensify and expand collaborative initiatives that had been launched before 2020. Our research also identified partnerships that are driving real change as they work to expand access to education and training pathways that lead to high-wage careers in growing sectors of the economy.

We want to help support and scale those types of efforts and break down more silos with an eye toward building a strong network of partnerships and coalitions. We're especially interested in supporting organizations that are committed to engaging in sustained, long-term efforts, rather than only pursuing one-time projects that might not be possible to grow or scale.

This is just a beginning for us—and for every organization and individual devoted to the cause of advancing racial equity.

We believe this scan can serve as a road map for policymakers, training and education professionals, and workforce development specialists who are wondering who they can connect with and how they can work with other stakeholders.

We're eager to be part of this forward momentum in the effort to build a better future for Black Americans.

“While the surge in corporate financial support for the Black community is a step forward, business leaders must also commit to fostering transformation within their own organizations to ensure that the newly revitalized movement to advance racial equity succeeds. To sustain and accelerate the momentum sparked in 2020, employers must increase funding and other resources for internal DEI efforts, and they should make it a priority to hire and support staff who exclusively focus on driving their organizations’ racial equity strategies and furthering their social impact.”

— Destiny Washington,
Manager, Racial Economic Equity,
Jobs for the Future





About JFF Labs Market Scans

At Jobs for the Future, we believe that innovation and technology, in concert with continued transformation of traditional systems and policy change, can revolutionize the learn and work ecosystem and, in turn, the ways in which we all live, learn, and work.

Our JFF Labs market scans are based on deep dives into innovation and technology landscapes filled with solutions that are transforming learning and working. Our goal is to identify opportunities, trends, market dynamics, and impact investment insights. Those efforts yield comprehensive reports that feature mission-aligned companies and nonprofit organizations of all sizes, from seed-stage startups founded by inspiring innovators and entrepreneurs to growth-stage organizations that are already creating significant social impact and business value.

We review hundreds of organizations to assess their approach to and concern for social impact, and the traction their efforts have gained. We identify the most innovative and advanced technologies and programs connecting people to rewarding jobs and careers, valuable education and training opportunities, effective workforce and education systems, and equitable, resilient opportunities for economic security and mobility—at scale.

Contributors and Authors



Maria Flynn
President & CEO

Kristina Francis
Executive Director, JFF Labs

Michael Collins
Vice President

Alex Swartzel
Deputy Director,
Acceleration

Tasha Williams
Writer and Researcher

Destiny Washington
Manager

Avni Nahar
Associate Director

Stacy Holliday
Associate Director

Jason Schunkewitz
Manager

Jennifer Giffels
Senior Manager

Tyler Nakatsu
Associate Director

Carlin Praytor
Manager

Bob Rawson
Senior Editor

Cara Capizzi
Designer

This report is dedicated to the memory of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery,
and the countless other Black lives lost to racist violence in America.

About Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the American workforce and education systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About JFFLabs

JFFLabs bridges JFF's traditional field leadership with new relationships, practices, and business models. We partner with visionary entrepreneurs, Fortune 500 companies, and investors to foster innovative solutions that create positive change in education and workforce systems. We are proud to identify and scale the most innovative and advanced technologies with the potential to transform America's education and workforce systems.

About JFF's Language Choices

JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity, rooted in the strengths of the people and communities we serve. We develop our content with the awareness that language can perpetuate privilege but also can educate, empower, and drive positive change to create a more equitable society. We will continually reevaluate our efforts as language usage continues to evolve.



With Funding from

Cognizant[®]
Foundation

This market scan is made possible through the generous support of Cognizant Foundation.

About Cognizant Foundation

As part of Cognizant's global commitment to engineer impact for good, the Cognizant Foundation works to promote inclusion, elevate underserved communities and prepare people for the future of work. Since 2018, the foundation has provided more than \$65 million in philanthropic support to organizations working to deliver industry-relevant education, technical skills training programs and critical research needed to modernize the ways we educate and employ our workforce. Learn more at www.cognizantfdn.org.



50 Milk St., 17th Floor, Boston, MA 02110

122 C St., NW, Suite 280, Washington, DC 20001

505 14th St., Suite 340, Oakland, CA 94612

TEL 617.728.4446 **WEB** www.jff.org